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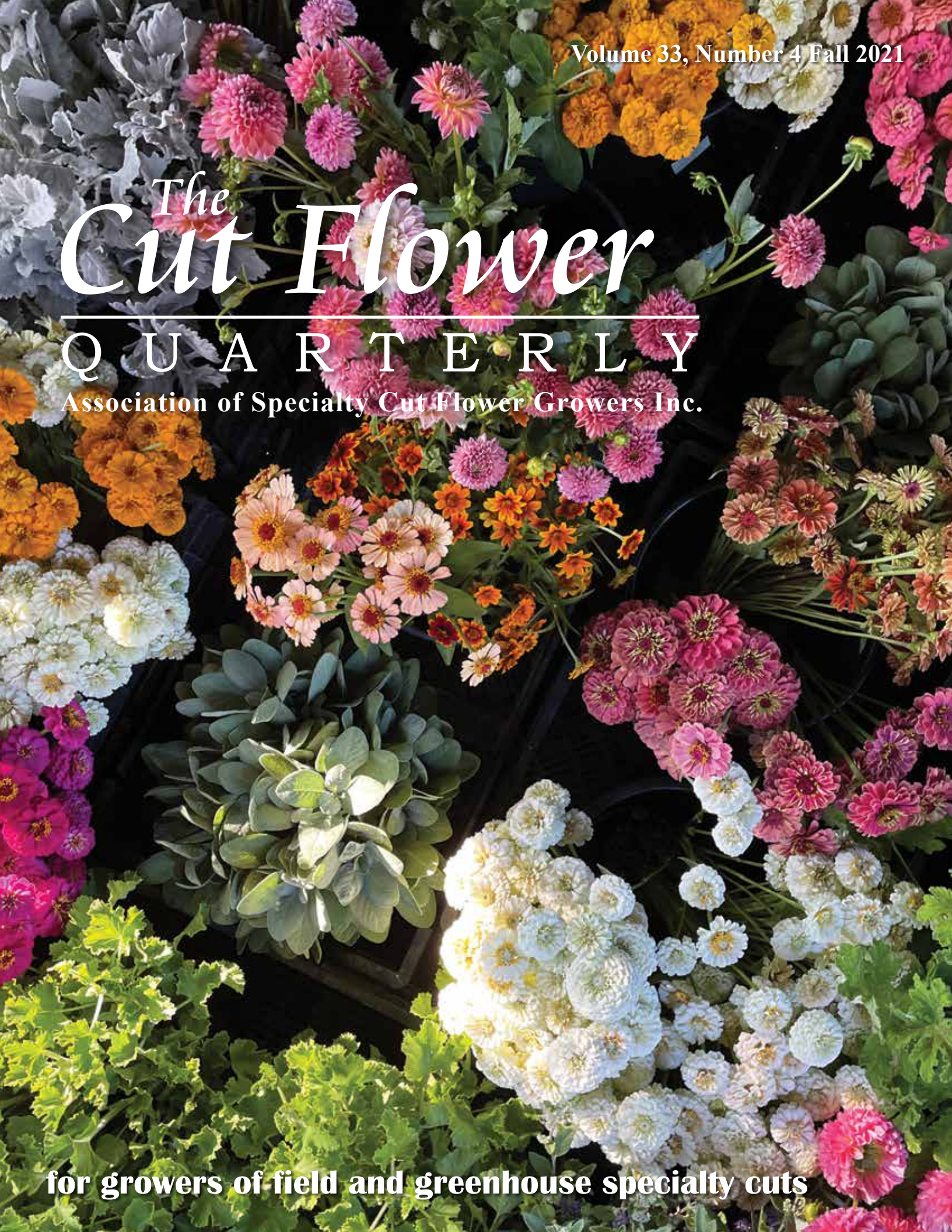

The Cut Flower QUARTERLY

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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From the PRESIDENT

Native Perennials and Hedgerows for Pest Control and Resiliency

Jennie Love

It was recently pointed out to me that farming is not natural. Nowhere in nature is there a monoculture, and so many of the crops we are all growing would never grow in our location without our rigorous farming efforts. I couldn't agree more! However, farming can be more in line with nature, even if it will never be a truly natural landscape.

I have had this long-standing dream for my own flower farm: **an all-native bouquet**, everything from the filler to the foliage to the focal flowers. I achieved that dream this summer with a bouquet made of echinacea, phlox, monarda, penstemon, baptisia, and diervilla. While it's not likely feasible to have a flower farm of *only* native plants and still be able to create beautiful mixed bouquets throughout the season, it is incredibly valuable to think about adding as many native plants as possible to your crop plans.

What exactly is a native plant? It's one that has been in a place since before colonization. Essentially an indigenous plant that was not carried across a sea or great distances to be where it is now. It can be hard to determine what's native and not native. The Audubon Society has a wonderful searchable database where you enter your zip code and they give you an exhaustive list of all the plants native to your region and the birds they support (www.audubon.org/native-plants). It's a fun way to spend a few hours reading!

But why focus on native blooms and foliage when there are sexy flower rock stars like dahlias, fancy tulips, peonies, and ranunculus that always seem to need more space in your fields? In a nutshell: **ecological resiliency**. Life on this planet is intrinsically interwoven in such a complex way that we humans cannot even begin to fathom. Birds, bugs, fungi, microbes, and much more all co-evolved alongside each other and alongside native plants, each becoming interdependent on the other in a cycle of reciprocity that helped them not just survive but thrive. When we humans turn a blind eye to that interconnectedness and populate a landscape with only non-native plants, focused entirely on meeting our own goals, we fail to be part of that cycle of natural give and take. In this simplified format, the farm ecosystem (humans being a part of that system) fails to thrive.

One oft-cited example of how powerful a native plant is in the landscape versus a non-native plant is that of the research done by Doug Tallamy at the University of Delaware. His data collection shows that a native oak tree in the mid-Atlantic region here in the United States supports on average over 500 species of caterpillars. In contrast, a ginkgo, a common landscaping tree brought in from Asia, hosts only 5 species of caterpillars. Caterpillars (and other bugs that live in trees) are vital food for the young broods of nesting songbirds. Birds and caterpillars are just one tiny link in a complex and massive food chain that keeps our world in balance. The selection of trees in a single mile stretch of a road could have a powerful impact on how much wildlife can live and thrive there. The same is true with our flower farms!

Hedgerows of native plants within or next to your fields are particularly powerful. Numerous scientific studies have been conducted on the benefits of native hedgerows on the overall functioning of a farm's ecosystem. One such study, published in 2014, was conducted by the University of California. The study compared field hedgerows of California native perennials to field edges that were left unmaintained (i.e., weedy) or treated with herbicides. Both pests (bad guys) and predator insects (good guys) were assessed as to their population numbers and the impact that had on neighboring tomato fields. The study found that the fields adjacent to native hedgerows had fewer pests overall, and a greater diversity and abundance of predator insects, especially parasitoid wasps. Benefits of the native hedgerows were noted up to 200 meters out into the tomato fields, with notably fewer aphids on the tomatoes than those fields that did not have native hedgerows. Fields adjacent to native hedgerows were less likely to reach an economic threshold of pest pressure that would require insecticide applications. The study recommended planting multiple hedgerows throughout a larger farm to keep economic

Baptisia

Photo - Regina Miller, Origin Photo

crops within 200 meters of a native hedgerow, which provided significant pest control through the entire growing area, ultimately reducing the need for chemical controls.

Lucky for us flower farmers, we do not have to choose between growing an economic crop or dedicating field space to a native hedgerow. For us, they can be one and the same! Any dense planting of a bushy native perennial in a long row is a hedgerow, providing habitat for myriad creatures that will aid in bringing balance to your farm's community, both above ground and below ground. Native perennials grow deep roots that stabilize soil and encourage native mycorrhizae to flourish. Both the dense foliage and the roots woven with mycelium slow down heavy rainfall as it hits the ground, reducing erosion and cleansing the water before it reaches streams and rivers.

Mountain Mint

By choosing to incorporate many native plants into your flower fields, you'll be making a concerted effort to have a more resilient growing space in the face of drastic weather changes. You'll encourage the bird population in particular; these winged friends will repay you by hunting for pests like cucumber beetles, slugs, and grasshoppers among your flowers. With each season, as the ecosystem rights itself, your farm will become more sustainable and less dependent on sprays and time-consuming techniques like organza bags over blooms.

But not all native plants make for good cutting material on a commercial level. Some have a short vase life. Some are slow growing so you can't cut much from them at any one time. Some don't hydrate well. Before putting in dozens of a given plant, do a trial planting of one or two and see if it really works as a cut.

The following is a list of some of my favorites here at my farm in Philadelphia, all of which have proven to be great for designing. Most everything on this list would be native to any farm in North America. But still do some research to find out what perennials are native to your own *region*. The closer to home, the better. I suspect there are many native plants yet to be discovered as great cuts. Let's figure it out together!

Aronia

Aronia arbutifolia, also commonly called chokeberry, is a wonderful, slender-stemmed shrub that offers up bright red foliage in the autumn and glossy green foliage in the summer. Foliage holds up well out of water! Shrubs also produce beautiful fruits in the fall that can be used in centerpiece designs.

Arrowwood Viburnum

Viburnum dentatum is one of my hardest-working shrubs around the farm, producing filler flowers, foliage, and berries all on one plant over the course of the season. Stems were used by indigenous peoples to make arrows (thus the common name), which is to say it's got slender, straight stems for arrangements. Birds adore it as shelter and a food source. It tolerates most any soil, and flowers on new wood so you can cut and cut and cut without fear of losing potential.

Mountain Mint

Pycnanthemum muticum is a fan favorite here in the ASCFG. Its robust and productive foliage is equally perfect for market bouquets and bridal bouquets. Begin cutting it when the small white flowers appear in midsummer (basically, if the bees are buzzing all over it, it's ready to cut). One criticism of mountain mint you may hear is that it spreads readily. I've not experienced that, likely because we cut it so much that it doesn't have extra energy to run. Even if it did, I'd be thrilled since I always want more!

Coneflower

Echinacea purpurea has had a lot of new hybrids coming onto the market in recent years. One of the few focal flowers native to the mid-Atlantic region here, it's great that they are available in such a wide range of colors and shapes now. The classic straight species purple is still a winner in my book and the simplest to grow from seed for your own propagation. Drought-tolerant and unfussy plants, it's easy to love them. But sometimes their petals get nibbled by bugs. Rather than despairing, we pluck the petals off mature blooms and use the bare cones as textural accents in bouquets. Super fun and long-lasting!

Baptisia

Baptisia australis is another standout native and one of the most productive plants at my farm. In spring, it puts out striking flower spikes in shades of yellow, purple, pink, cream or near-blue. I leave about half the flowers on the plants, though, as I love the green seed pods that come next; a great accent in June wedding designs. Then the rest of the year we're using the abundant foliage for mixed bouquets and wedding designs alike. The flowers and foliage can be a bit tricky to initially hydrate. Harvest early in the morning and store in the cooler overnight before using.

Rudbeckia

Rudbeckia triloba is a personal favorite of mine, but all rudbeckias (black-eyed Susans) are notable native cut flowers. My affinity for *R. triloba* lies in the fact that it's a cheerful and highly productive filler that reseeds itself happily, so you'll always have plenty. Towering at about 5 feet on my farm, we can cut steadily from it for several weeks in late summer. Cut when the flowers are fully open for a long vase life. Its clear yellow flowers go with most any color palette. I've got mine in some afternoon shade without any irrigation and it's happy as can be!

Yarrow

There's some debate about whether *Achillea millefolium* can really be called a native plant to North America. Yarrow is actually native to Europe. But it was brought here by colonists so early on and has since naturalized so much in the U.S. that it is now generally accepted as a native wildflower by many horticulturalists. Since it's such a great cut flower, it's getting a nod here as a perennial that can help balance your farm's ecosystem. Many useful medicinal qualities to boot!

Penstemon

I know Joe Schmitt is going to love this one since he introduced me to it. *Penstemon digitalis*, also commonly known as beardtongue, is a perennial spike flower that reminds me of a more whimsical snapdragon. Highly productive once established, these meadow and prairie dwellers are drought-tolerant and pest-free, blooming profusely in early summer at my farm. There are several new cultivars coming onto the market right now that make for an extra showy stem that is likely to fetch a premium price. Certain varieties also make interesting seed heads that dry well. This is a plant family worth looking into more!

Phlox

Phlox paniculata is not to be confused with the little annual phlox varieties that are so popular with farmer-florists. This perennial native is often towering and productive in a way those wimpy annual types will never be. Cultivars are available in a rainbow of colors. 'David', 'Fashionably Early Crystal', and 'Jenna' are some of my favorites. In our hot, humid summers here, they have appreciated a touch of afternoon shade and a deep mulch to keep their roots cool. While deer resistant, I have found groundhogs enjoy nibbling on them. To avoid shedding petals, cut when the buds are swollen and colored but before the blooms open. Once pollinated, the individual florets drop almost immediately.

Monarda

Diervilla

Diervilla rivularis, also known as bush honeysuckle, is a small native shrub that deserves a lot more attention in the flower farming world. It can be used for its small yellow flowers as a filler or, most often here at Love 'n Fresh Flowers, it can be used as a long-lasting foliage in all manner of bouquets and designs. About thigh-high, it is constantly sending up new slender woody stems all season. It is a suckering plant so it will spread if left unattended, but that quality is what makes is such a productive cut.

Goldenrod

Solidago speciosa is such a common meadow wildflower around here that it's gotten a bad rap as being the culprit for autumn seasonal allergies. In fact, that culprit is ragweed, which gets pollinated by the wind (thus pollen up our noses). Goldenrod, on the other hand, is pollinated exclusively by beneficial insects (no pollen up our noses), making it an incredibly valuable native plant to have on your farm. In my experience, it hates to be domesticated and won't thrive if "cropped" in the traditional rows in a flower field. Instead, I let a patch of it run wild on the edges of the farm, where it is utterly carefree and zero maintenance. It can be harvested for greenery starting in July, but we cut the bulk of it here when it reaches the chartreuse bud stage—an amazing filler for late August bouquets! It's also a great dried flower that fades to that oh-so-popular tan/bleached shade that's trending right now.

Monarda

Monarda punctata is my favorite of the beebalms. There are many native monardas used for cutting, but this one in particular is incredibly striking for wedding design work. A prairie wildflower by nature, it's a free-loving spirit that can adapt to most any sunny spot and soil. Its little yellow florets with brown spots remind me of orchids. Sometimes these little florets won't look so great in your design work, but it is easy to pluck them out and leave the soft lavender pink foliage in place. A member of the mint family, monarda can spread, but I've never had any trouble with it being a thug here at my farm.

Joe Pye

Joe Pye

Eupatorium dubium is another lesser-known native rock star for cut flower production. It has a delicate umbel of creamy lilac flowers in late summer and autumn that are superb in mixed bouquets and event design work alike. The first flush of sturdy, straight stems is big and tall, and then it reblooms throughout the autumn with shorter side shoots that we use in centerpieces. The variety 'Little Joe' is my favorite. *Eupatorium* is very drought tolerant and a huge butterfly magnet.

Clethra

Clethra alnifolia, also sometimes called summersweet, is a shorter shrub that can handle tricky spots with less-than-ideal conditions. Part shade and wet spots are its favorites, but it'll adapt to pretty much anywhere. It will spread if left unchecked, a habit I quite like personally, but one to be aware of if you are confined to a small growing space. Small flower spikes, either in white or pink, develop in the middle of summer that have the sweetest scent. Great filler for wedding designs as the fragrance is notable and floral, but not overpowering—one of those smells that will tickle guests' memories for years to come. Foliage is great in design work too!

Bleeding Hearts

Dicentra spectabilis is such a charming woodland plant and perfect for any shady spot around your farm or garden. Its delicate appearance belies a surprisingly long vase life. A spring ephemeral, it is harvestable for only about ten days each season but given it can thrive in spots many other cuts would fail, it's worth tucking into your crop plan. Harvest when a flower or two at the bottom of the stem has gone to seed, which signals the stem is mature enough to not wilt.

Lisianthus

That's right! *Eustoma grandiflorum* is a native to North American prairies in Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Kansas. Not really a candidate for making a bushy hedgerow, lisianthus surely is the best native focal flower, though!

Lisianthus

Jennie Love is owner of Love 'n Fresh Flowers.
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The Farmer and the Florist

Quality, Consistency, and Collaboration

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick

Great relationships take work, and the bond between a florist and their farmer is no exception. The more humility and mindfulness each can bring to the table, the better the outcome. Seriously—after nine years of working together, we feel the flowers get more beautiful all the time, and our communication is stronger than ever.

We're lucky to have this same trust and understanding with other farmers and florists, too! The same principles apply across all of these vendor/customer relationships. We've laid out our top principles here; we hope they help you form stronger relationships with your local partners!

Ellen's Top Three Qualities That Make a Farmer a Reliable Supplier

High-Quality Product

Having high-quality flowers is probably the most important thing for us when deciding to work with a grower. As a florist selling to end users, especially for weddings, the flowers we put out in the world have to be the best quality possible. If a grower has other great qualities but has poor-quality blooms, they'll never be more to us than a backup supplier. Additionally, if you are a grower selling to conventional florists who normally buy from a wholesaler, you are unlikely to be able to compete on price or ease of ordering, so you must compete on quality. Quality is what will set a grower apart from their competitors in the florists' eyes.

Here is a partial list of what we're looking for when we talk about quality:

- Unblemished blooms: Blooms that have bug bites, bruises, or missing petals can't be used in design. Some designers will argue this point, but blemishes on flowers add to the myth that local blooms are somehow inferior to conventionally-sourced blooms or that they are somehow less "professional". Additionally, no wedding client wants to spend thousands of dollars on their wedding photographer for them to take photos of flowers with bug bites and bruises.

- Proper harvesting stage and postharvest care. Harvesting at the right stage is critical to ensure what I talk about above—unblemished blooms. Take sunflowers, for instance. In the ASCFG book *Postharvest Handling of Cut Flowers and Greens*, the advice is to harvest when "1-2 petals have lifted off the center disk. The majority of foliage should be removed as it fades quickly and often looks ragged." If a grower isn't educated about when to harvest, they may be harvesting when the flowers are totally open, and leaving all the foliage on. When transporting open blooms, there is a high risk of bruising, petal loss, and damage. These blooms would then be unusable to a florist. Additionally, harvest time and postharvest care is going to directly affect vase life. If a grower is selling to a florist who does retail sales, rather than event work, a long vase life is critical to attracting and keeping happy customers. Flowers that are not properly harvested and cared for after harvest will have decreased vase life and can lead to complaints by customers.

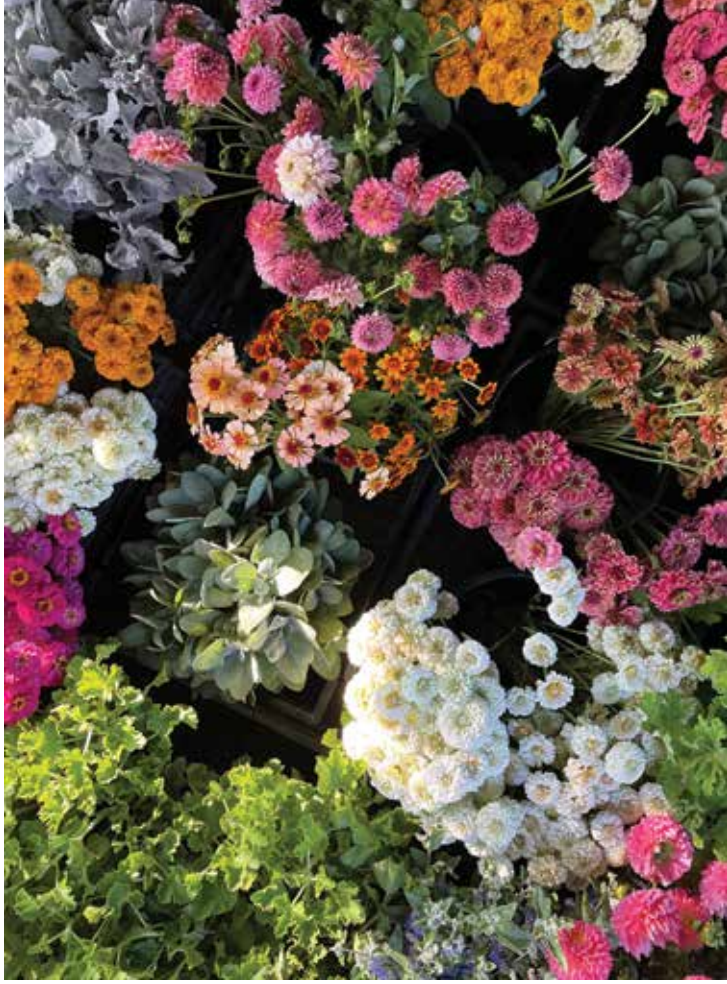
- Consistent product. Florists want and need to count on a product. We want a quality, consistent product each week (barring emergencies) that we can rely on.

Prioritizes Florist Sales Over Other Outlets

We buy from all types of growers—growers who sell mostly at markets or grocery stores, growers who only sell one crop to us one time of year, growers we buy from only in the winter. We need to have this depth of relationships to ensure we can sustain year-round work with local flowers. Our most valued suppliers, however, those we buy from every single week, are growers who prioritize selling to florists over selling through other outlets. These farmers customize everything they do to create the best experience for the florist, from growing crops that florists like and can use, to communicating what's available, to making it easy to access the flowers. These growers give their florists priority when offering blooms, rather than offering them the leftovers after their weekend markets.

Willingness to Deliver

This is a hot topic between farmers and florists. I spent the first seven or so years of my business picking up from farmers at their farms, farmers' markets, and on the side of the road. I did this while having a full-time job and running Local Color Flowers. I did it because I was committed to sourcing locally and the growers I was buying from did not offer delivery. Most of these farmers sold the majority of their flowers at farmers' markets. This is important to note because it makes sense that they didn't have the time, energy or interest in spending time or money delivering to a small florist, without a lot of buying power, when florists were not their main customer. What we learned through this process is that we need to find farmers who prioritize selling to florists. Making it easy for us to get flowers makes us want to work with a grower more.



Laura Beth's Top Three Qualities That Make a Florist an Awesome Customer

Consistent Ordering

Ordering on a weekly basis is the way to my heart! We have about 6-8 florists who order every single week, sometimes twice a week. I don't mind if they're little orders, so long as they're consistent. These orders lessen the scary unpredictability of owning my own business.

Have you ever had a new customer enthusiastically promise to order tons of flowers, and then buy very little or nothing? As a business owner, you're likely going to get ghosted from time to time. (To "ghost" means to disappear with no explanation or warning.) It happens to all of us, and it's never personal. I just make a mental note to put that customer lower on my priority list.

For example, one of my customers reaches out a few times a year, always wanting my best and most valuable crops, and always last minute. If she ordered consistently throughout the year, I'd go out of my way to help her. But because she drops off the face of the earth for months at a time, I feel she isn't worth the effort. I'd rather give priority to those who buy from me every week, even if it's with small budgets, than prioritize random and unpredictable orders.

We give our very best service to those who order every week, even during the slow summer season. That service includes giving early access to our availability lists, taking last-minute orders, and even offering discounts. It's so worth it to know that we'll have somewhere to send our product each and every week!

Collaboration

In my other life before farming, I wanted to be an orchestral musician. I loved being in a room with others who all had a common goal: to make the most beautiful music. When I finally made it to conservatory after high school, I was surrounded by other musicians all the time, but it was different than I expected. Most people were focused on their own individual practice; there were thousands of us all vying for just a few spots in a professional orchestra. The hard truth was that to succeed, we needed to best each other, not work together.

Long story short, I dropped out of conservatory and eventually found my way to farming, where I rediscovered that orchestral spirit. Farm teams have to work together to get it done; we help each other lift heavy things, we care for each other on hot or rainy days. We inspire each other to do better, work harder, and find meaning in the tasks of every day.

In our customers, I look for that same sense of we're-all-in-this-togetherness. Our florists need us to grow amazing flowers, and we need them to share our harvests with the world. Our best customers offer ideas, express gratitude, show their support, give constructive criticism, find ways to connect; we do the same for them. Together, we make it happen—and it's that focus on collaboration that I find most rewarding in our best customers.

Experience

New customers are often also new to the floral industry. That means they need our help understanding what's in season, navigating our ordering process, and even knowing how to take care of flowers and foliage. We're always happy to see more people join the community, but these are not great customers for us early on; they typically have small budgets and need a lot of guidance.

Our best customers, then, either already have experience buying local blooms, or they've worked with us long enough to know the ropes. We can then start learning from them about quality standards and new varieties we should grow! About half of our best customers already had experience when we began working together, and the other half were new to local flowers and we held them by the hand a bit at first.

One of the best things about having experienced customers is that it saves so much time! They don't put the basil in the cooler and call me about brown foliage. They don't ask me lots of questions about what will be available on any given week. Instead, they know what to expect and they communicate just the right amount to get what they need.

The Take-home Message

Each relationship is different. Every business is different. What we value in a supplier or customer may be different than what you value. The takeaway is that if you figure out what is important to your farmer or your florist, you'll be better equipped to sustain a relationship that is a WIN-WIN!

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Spring Meadow.

Patagonia in Bloom

Jodi Helmer

Local flowers have a big following in a small Arizona town.

Aishah Lurry

Patagonia, Arizona, is small town located 60 miles south of Tucson and 30 miles north of the United States-Mexico border. There are no major supermarkets in town and, until Aishah Lurry started Patagonia Flower Farm launched in 2017, there were no flower farms.

"I loved having cut flowers but you had to travel pretty far to get them," she recalls. "I knew that I wanted to walk out my door and see a sea of flowers…and it sparked the ideas that if I could grow flowers, I could sell them; it was a selfish whim."

Although Lurry loved the idea of growing cut flowers, she had no experience. She purchased books and took flower farming classes through Floret before sowing the first seeds in a 4,000-square foot plot of leased land that sits 4,000 feet above sea level.

Lurry installed tall fencing to keep javelina, destructive mammals that look like wild boars, out of the gardens, and transformed a field of Johnson and sacaton grass into a flower farm that uses organic growing methods to produce colorful cut flowers.

With the first flowers in the field, Aishah turned her attention to marketing the blooms. She knew that most flower farmers set up booths at farmers' markets to reach customers, generate sales, and build brand awareness but the self-described introvert didn't want to follow that path.

"I never wanted to do farmers' markets and have people asking, 'Why are your flowers too expensive?'" she explains. "As an African American in a predominantly white area, I didn't want to put myself out there and deal with all of the microaggressions."

So Lurry developed alternative sales channels: she sold flowers like anemone, narcissus, sedum, scabiosa, snapdragons, yarrow, verbena, sunflowers, and zinnias from her farm through the local health food store, and developed a popular subscription program.

The subscription service included three different sizes of arrangements delivered over four, six or eight weeks. She started off delivering flowers in local areas, calling the subscription model "the foundation of [her] business" but the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything.

"COVID changed the model," she recalls. "I had to think fast."

Pandemic Pivot

When the pandemic started, Lurry worked overtime to meet the demand for fresh flowers but sales slowed this summer when regular customers left town for vacation; her subscription sales decreased 50 percent.

"My foundation was pulled out from underneath me," she says. "I started doing things I said I'd never do."

Aishah traded her red convertible for a van, which allowed her to haul more flowers and travel greater distances; she expanded her sales into Tucson and reached a much larger market.

If you take an introvert and put them next to them what they're passionate about, it works out really well. I love being able to dress up and talk about flowers.

"The first few years, I sold just in my town and built my foundation," she says. "I always knew I'd have to leave town eventually."

In addition to selling her cut flowers at a farmers' market and an artisan market, Lurry also launched a mobile flower bar. She sets up three times per week, twice in Patagonia and once in Tucson, setting out flowers and inviting customers to choose their own fresh cut blooms and create one-of-a-kind bouquets on-site.

"I'm inviting people to have an experience," she explains.

For Aishah, who operates Patagonia Flower Farm solo, setting out flowers (instead of selling pre-made bouquets) also reduces labor and increases profits. The flower bar has another unexpected benefit—it's increased the amount people spend on flowers.

Lurry finds pricing individual stems much easier than establishing a price for an entire bouquet, and believes that flower bars are a good option for growers who are tempted to fill a vase with 40 stems and charge $10.

Instead of setting out $15 bouquets, she's discovered that customers will spend $25 to $50 on DIY bouquets at the flower bar. It's helped ease some of her nerves about establishing prices for her flowers.

"[When I make a bouquet], I have these thoughts like, 'Oh, this is too expensive,'" she says. "The flower bar gets me out of that mindset because people are making their own decisions about how much to spend."

Keeping Up with Demand

The farmers markets' and flower bars have done more than help Lurry recoup the revenue from lost subscription sales; she's also learned some unexpected lessons about herself.

"If you take an introvert and put them next to them what they're passionate about, it works out really well," she says. "I love being able to dress up and talk about flowers."

Selling at events has also allowed her to introduce Patagonia Flower Farm to a broader community and to new customers—and she expanded the farm to keep up with the demand.

Aishah added an additional 4,000 square feet of growing space, filling it with native plants like penstemon, columbine, solidago, and jewels of Opar; she also added hoophouses and started experimenting with straw bale gardens (that the javelina tried to devour).

Expanding the farm doesn't mean that Lurry has aspirations to become a large operation. She'd rather maintain a small farm that's manageable for a solo grower, and plans to continue hosting pop-up flower bars and promoting the subscription program to new and returning customers.

"Even though there are crazy things going on with COVID, there are some great things, too [and] I'm so happy with where I'm at right now," she says. "The biggest thing I've learned is how to use my flexibility muscle, and ebb and flow with the business to keep providing an outstanding, beautiful product for my customers."

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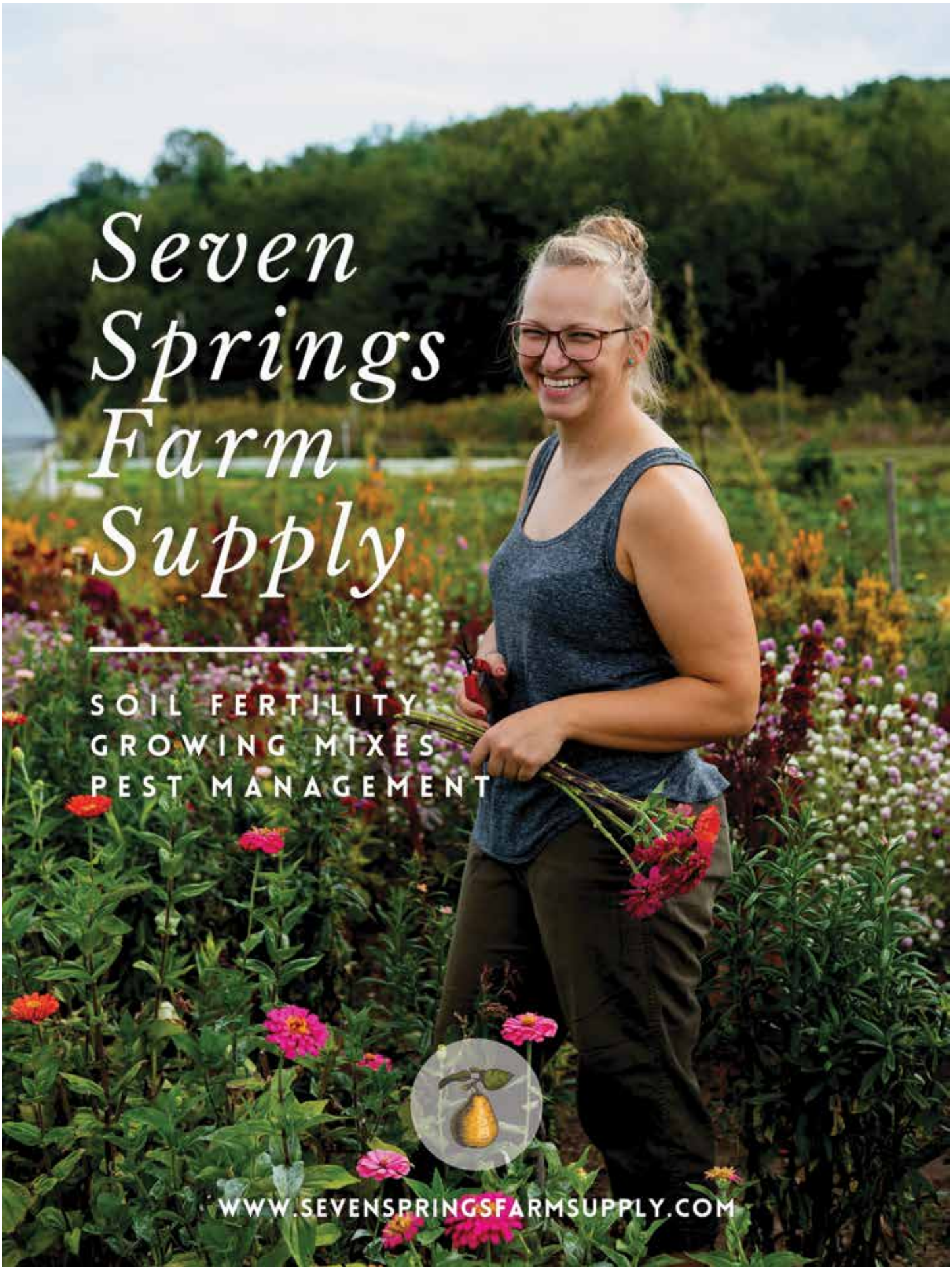
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Is a Flower CSA Right for You?

Learn the ins and outs of floral CSAs from farmers who are making it work for them.

Julie Martens Forney

Community supported agriculture (CSA) has enjoyed a resurgence over the last year as pandemic-induced shutdowns shifted consumer focus from eating out to cooking in. Local farm produce that had been earmarked for restaurants found a ready outlet in the kitchens of consumers. It's no surprise that flower subscription sales followed a similar path.

As a new grower, Erin Perry, owner of Rewild Flower Farm in Fort Langley, British Columbia, kicked off her flower farm with a CSA subscription service aimed to "bring joy and happiness to a small community of friends and family during the pandemic." She chose CSA as her first model "because it seemed predictable and made the most sense. I liked that I could plan around it and be home on the weekend with family," she says. Perry tends what she dubs a micro farm, growing roughly 1/7 of an acre of flowers on a larger 25-acre homestead farm.

Barnside Flower Farm in Red Bud, Illinois, also responded to the pandemic with a flower share. "During COVID, we wanted to be as available to our customers as we could," says owner Carrie Koester. "We offered a subscription because people asked for it. In 2021, the subscription expanded to 32 members. It accounts for only 20 percent of our farm income, but it keeps our name out there in the community." Barnside sells 1,200 garden mums on site each fall, so brand recognition is important to keep autumn sales forefront in people's minds.

But the pandemic is just one part of the reason many flower farmers have jumped on the CSA bandwagon. Another great reason? Income. With 22 years in flower growing, Erin McMullen of Raindrop Farms in Philomath, Oregon, started offering a flower CSA long before the pandemic arrived. "One of the main things that prompted us to start CSA is because it provides cash up front that helps you get things growing in spring. It's a great way to jump-start the season as far as finances go."

Rebecca Kutzer-Rice, co-owner of Moonshot Farm in East Windsor, New Jersey, agrees. Moonshot opened in November 2020, and with bulbs arriving and seed orders going in, Kutzer-Rice launched a flower subscription to generate some needed cash flow. Koester also loves the income boost that the CSA brings. "It's so nice to have income to pay for extra infrastructure, weed barrier, tools, and all the things you need when you're setting up in spring," she says.

Structuring a Flower Share

There's really no limit to how creatively you can package your flower subscription. Koester delivers bouquets every other week over a 10-week period for a total of five bouquets. She ends the share in late August in order to prepare for the farm's annual Fall Market Days, which feature sales of the farm's garden mums, straw, corn stalks, broom corn, and dried flower wreaths.

Koester's customers pick up their bouquets, wrapped in kraft paper with the Barnside label, at one of three local businesses: a brewery, winery, or coffee shop. "That relationship with other small businesses is a real win-win. Our customers go in on Friday to pick up a bouquet and typically pick up a pint or coffee while there," Koester says. "It also takes pressure off our farm. We're a family of six—it's so hard to have our farm look pristine 24-7."

Rain Drop Farm's first CSA was an eight-week share that has evolved into a full-season share that runs 18 to 20 weeks from June 1 to the last week of September. "People like having that longer consistency," McMullen says. Of her 25 subscriptions, 12 go to businesses. Those are vased and designed, where personal accounts receive a wrapped, hand-tied bouquet. Shares go out on Mondays, mostly because many of the non-business clients work at nearby Oregon State University. "Those bouquets end up on people's desks for the week," McMullen adds.

At Moonshot Farm, subscription deliveries occur on a monthly basis with customers choosing three early months, three late months, or all six. "I chose monthly because I wanted our customers to experience how dramatically the flowers change over the course of a season," Kutzer-Rice says. For instance, August bouquets feature lisianthus, sunflowers, cosmos, millet, and zinnia. With September's arrival, the floral palette shifts to dahlias, eucalyptus, broom corn and celosia.

"The monthly has worked so well for us," she says. "We split the accounts so customers pick up on either the first or second Wednesday of the month. If they want more flowers during the month, they can visit us at the farmers' market. That midweek CSA pick-up also helps spread out the workload of daily harvests." Moonshot Farm currently has customers pick up their shares at the farm, which is a 25-minute drive from Princeton. The farm also offers fresh eggs, which customers often purchase while getting flowers.

For Perry, the decision to go with a monthly share came from her desire to grow her customer base. "I wanted to continue with people from last year while developing customers closer to my home. A monthly share gave me a way to let people who weren't my friends and family test the water and see if it

A spring CSA bouquet from Moonshot Farm, New Jersey, features a mix of bulbs, allium, and viburnum.

The Future is Bright

Each of the growers interviewed is planning for growth in their CSA offerings. Why? Because customer response has been great. People want locally-grown flowers. Check out how these farms plan to expand their flower shares next year.

Moonshot Farm, New Jersey, Rebecca Kutzer-Rice
We hope to partner with a bakery in Princeton to have CSA pick-ups there, as well as at the farm. We had 25 subscriptions this year. Next year's goal is 90.

Rewild Flower Farm, British Columbia, Erin Perry
We're increasing our growing area, and I plan to spend winter creating a website that compels people to want to engage with it and purchase. Of course I'm also aiming for an earlier start in the summer, as well as some spring bulb offerings.

Barnside Flower Farm, Illinois, Carrie Koester
We're going to simplify for next year, offering 4 bouquets per month, every week for four weeks. We also want to open our farm to the public in spring for peonies and again in fall for the mum season. Summer will continue to be CSA, which we plan to expand. Lastly, we're expanding our production area.

Rain Drop Farms, Oregon, Erin McMullen
One reason I love this job is because every year is a clean slate—you get to try something different and you can apply lessons from the past to the future. We're trying to shift more into perennials and things that need less consistent maintenance, like our garden roses.

Carrie Koester, Barnside Flower Farm, counts on CSA income to boost spring finances. The farm is known locally for its 1,200 fall garden mums, visible in the background.

was for them," she shares. She offered a monthly for 5 weeks, running from July to early October. "I realize now I could have offered 10 weeks, but the smaller CSA share price has helped me understand why people are signing up and if my marketing is working."

Kutzer-Rice moved from New York City to New Jersey with her family to start Moonshot Farm, which also raises sheep. "When we lived in the city, we belonged to a vegetable CSA. Some weeks we would get so much, and other weeks, less. We use that model with our customers," she explains. "When the farm is booming, we give them extra flowers. We might give a full bouquet with a small one for a mason jar, too. It balances out over the season."

Plan Your Season

Striking that seasonal balance is one challenge most CSA flower growers encounter, especially in spring. It's easy to deliver full bouquets from summer into early fall, but the spring window proves especially challenging. "When you're starting to plan in December and choosing a start time in spring, in your mind, you think it's going to work. But honestly, we started too early this year," Koester explains. "We had high-quality, high-dollar flowers like ranunculus and anemones, but we just didn't feel like we were giving enough in the bouquets. We need more fillers to create that full arrangement our customers expect."

Every grower agrees with this issue. McMullen bumped her start date to June 1 this year and "is never going back. May is always challenging. It's a constant battle not to feel we can fill bouquets adequately. What I struggle with most in spring is filler. I can overwinter eucalyptus which is popular in springtime, and that helps, but filler is what makes the bouquet substantial enough to carry it for the share."

To solve the spring share conundrum, farmers are considering short shares featuring single bulb bouquets, early high tunnel peonies or pop-up shares held at small businesses where share pick-ups typically occur. Kutzer-Rice is opting for one month of weekly flowers featuring bulbs like ranunculus, anemone, daffodil, and tulip. "Those flowers are so popular with our customers," she says. "These will be straight bunches, not mixed bouquets. I'm going to market it as 'Spring Fling.' I hope to sell enough to fund our bulb purchases."

Other CSA Challenges

Communication is the No. 1 issue every CSA flower grower stressed, with forgotten pick-ups a close second. It's important to communicate what pick-up looks like, what customers should expect, what time, day, etc. Rain Drop Farms sends out a weekly Mailchimp email newsletter to familiarize new customers with the process. "With a long summer share, you can run into holidays like July 4 or even Labor Day. We used to have confusion around those dates, but now we just consistently deliver every Monday, as long as our pick-up locations are open," McMullen says.

Kutzer-Rice sends out an email newsletter the day before CSA pick-ups. "It serves as an update on the farm, helping our customers feel connected and part of our story, and a reminder that it's time to get your bouquet," she shares. The newsletter walks through the best of what is in the bouquet, giving information about the flowers and how to care for them. "We give little care tips, like removing lily pollen anthers or changing sunflower water often. Customers really like the newsletter. Next year we'll include a photo of the bouquet with the flowers labeled."

The most important information Koester shares with customers is to pick up flowers the day they're available, recut stems to maximize water intake, and use the postharvest solution included

Barnside Flower Farm, Illinois, sends out a reminder email on delivery days packed with tips on flower care.

Moonshot Farm, New Jersey, creates a high-end luxury summer share bouquet that features a litany of customer favorites: lisianthus, millet, gerbera daisy, cosmos, and coneflowers.

with the bouquets. "We give our customers the longest stems possible, and tell them to have fun arranging it the way they want. If you want five tiny arrangements in five rooms, go for it. If you want one dramatic arrangement, do it. There's no wrong way," she says. "If you cut something too short, you can try again in two weeks. At the end of the summer, they're all pros at arranging."

Barnside Flower Farm flower CSA offers pick-up at local businesses, including a coffee shop. Carrie Koester, owner, loves arranging pick-up at small businesses. She suggests working with a coffee shop, winery or brewery.

One important detail is deciding what you'll do about a missed pick-up. Koester lets the business keep any forgotten bouquets, suggesting they share it with a worker or customer to brighten their day. "I give anyone who forgets a bouquet an extra one at the end of the season. We won't go bankrupt giving a bouquet or two away, especially at that point in the season when there is plenty. I want customers to feel they get the full value of their share," she says.

With a long subscription service, another challenge you might encounter is burnout. McMullen does, right about late August. To counter that, Rain Drop Farms usually does a week of dried flower bouquets in August. "We can make those up and forget about them, and there's no effort that week," she says. "People love it because it's different. I love it because it gives us a break and a way to keep the enthusiasm going."

Pricing a Subscription

Setting a bouquet price starts with market research. "We also sell to florists, so we use the florist price as our basis," Koester explains. "I won't charge that same price, but aim to be 15 to 20 percent higher to cover our time, gas, sleeves, and other extras. Don't reinvent the wheel—take it and tweak it for what's happening in your business."

At Moonshot Farm, Kutzer-Rice did a lot of market analysis. "We have a lot of flower farmers where we are, as well as vegetable farmers who are selling flowers. So we made a spreadsheet with a key of prices, which ranged from $5 to $20, what most people charge for a big bouquet.

"We decided we should have a luxury flower farm—that is our niche. We're still slowly creeping into that price point," she says. "We charge more of a florist price at $33 for that monthly bouquet (compared to other local CSAs charging $15 to $18). We're definitely attracting those customers who are looking for a higher end product.

Perry also did market research, working with local flower growers to understand the prices they offer. "I want to stay current with local pricing and what the market bears, balancing that with looking at the crops I'm offering," she explains. "For instance, if a grower has two 40-foot rows of 'Queen Lime' zinnia, it's not rare for them, so they can be generous with it and price it lower. But with something more exclusive like the first peonies of the season, you can charge a more premium price."

She intentionally kept her prices lower. "I chose a pricing model that I felt fit with my growing experience and bouquet-making skill level. I'll earn an increase in price with experience and feedback from customers. My conditioning methods seem to be working, and that gives me the incentive and confidence to nose the price up," she shares.

What to Grow for CSA

For a share, the ideal crops are ones that your customers won't easily find elsewhere. All customers love lisianthus, dahlias, and ranunculus. For Kutzer-Rice, a surprise breakout favorite was calla lilies, because they lasted from two to four weeks. With the monthly share, she focuses on flowers with a longer vase life. "This year we grew double-flowering Roselilies, which were a hit. I used Asiatic and hybrid lilies for the first time this year, too. I'm doing succession planting every two weeks with them so we have a great focal flower always in season. It makes the whole bouquet seem big and grand."

Koester's flower choices tend toward high-end blooms, including celosia, cosmos, crimson basil, and ranunculus. "We try to find varieties no one has at the grocery store or florist, like 'Madame Butterfly' snapdragons," she says. She grows 90 percent of her flowers from seed or tuber, which helps her get those unusual varieties.

Best CSA Advice from Growers

Rebecca Kutzer-Rice, Moonshot Farm, New Jersey
When our CSA ends, we have the sign-up for the new one ready to go so customers can buy again while it's fresh in their minds. Also, promote your share around Valentine's Day. We plan to do a discount where if someone signs up for a full year CSA and they refer a friend, they'll both get $30, which is a free bouquet.

Erin McMullen, Rain Drop Farms, Oregon
Think creatively for add-ons. Towards the end of the season we do an add-on with dried bouquets, which is really popular. Customers buy buckets of dried flowers to have through winter. We do small gourd bags, too. We also do a Mother's Day add-on where people can order a single bouquet for the day at a stand-alone price for delivery, or for $15 they can add that bouquet to a full share. We have a lot of adult children who buy that for their in-town mothers. Offering that add-on really bumped subscriptions.

Carrie Koester, Barnside Flower Farm, Illinois
Start simple, especially in your first year. Start when you have the most flowers available so you won't feel crunched. Working with a local business is amazing, but finding the right fit is important. Definitely write down all of your recipes of your bouquets.

Erin Perry, Rewild Flower Farm, British Columbia
Don't forget why you're doing what you're doing. Our days get long, hot, and we're scrambling for solutions. It can feel daunting. It's so easy to loop on that anxiety especially during the grueling parts of the year. Search for your why when you're feeling that. Remember that feelings will shift, so just bring it back to your why, your own story of why you're growing flowers and sharing with people."

"My customers are fascinated with the zinnias because they last so long. Between where we grow them and how I'm conditioning them, they're outlasting other flowers," Perry says. "In the house, mine become dry and don't turn brown." Her favorite fillers are grasses and orach. "You can use the orach leaves, the early part of the flower seed head, and the seed head itself before the seeds drop. All three stages are gorgeous." She has a dedicated patch for it and broadcasts the seed. "The tighter spaced ones grow more slowly and develop later than those that have more room to start. It's a good seven-week plant."

Tips for Marketing a Flower CSA

Flower farmers find good success marketing their shares on social media and partnering with local businesses. Rain Drop Farms leans on Facebook and Instagram posts to boost sales, and their pick-up locations also promote the share on their social media. "The coffee shop we work with has four locations, one of which has an outdoor patio where we typically do a spring workshop to promote our share," McMullen says.

Workshop topics include a flower crown, dried flowers, and posey bouquets. "It's usually scheduled during Mom's Weekend at Oregon State University, which draws customers. We consistently get a bump from those workshops," she adds.

Perry has found good success through Facebook groups. "Look for community groups. Most have a small business day where they'll let you promote your services. I had only one to two posts in a group and it generated so much interest. It's also good to engage with local businesses any way you can. They may share your content or offer a pop-up at their studio. I live next door to a pumpkin and Christmas tree farm, which welcomes me with my flowers during their event weekends."

Moonshot Farm partnered with a local organization, the Arts Council of Princeton, to offer a custom pottery vase for customers. "That relationship offered a good fit for our customers who are seeking out luxury products, and it helped us, as newcomers to the area, by introducing us to their established customer base," Kutzer-Rice says.

Julie Martens Forney is an avid gardener and freelance writer who's been writing about flower and plant production, horticulture research and consumer gardening for over 30 years. Contact her at julie@wordsthatbloom.com.

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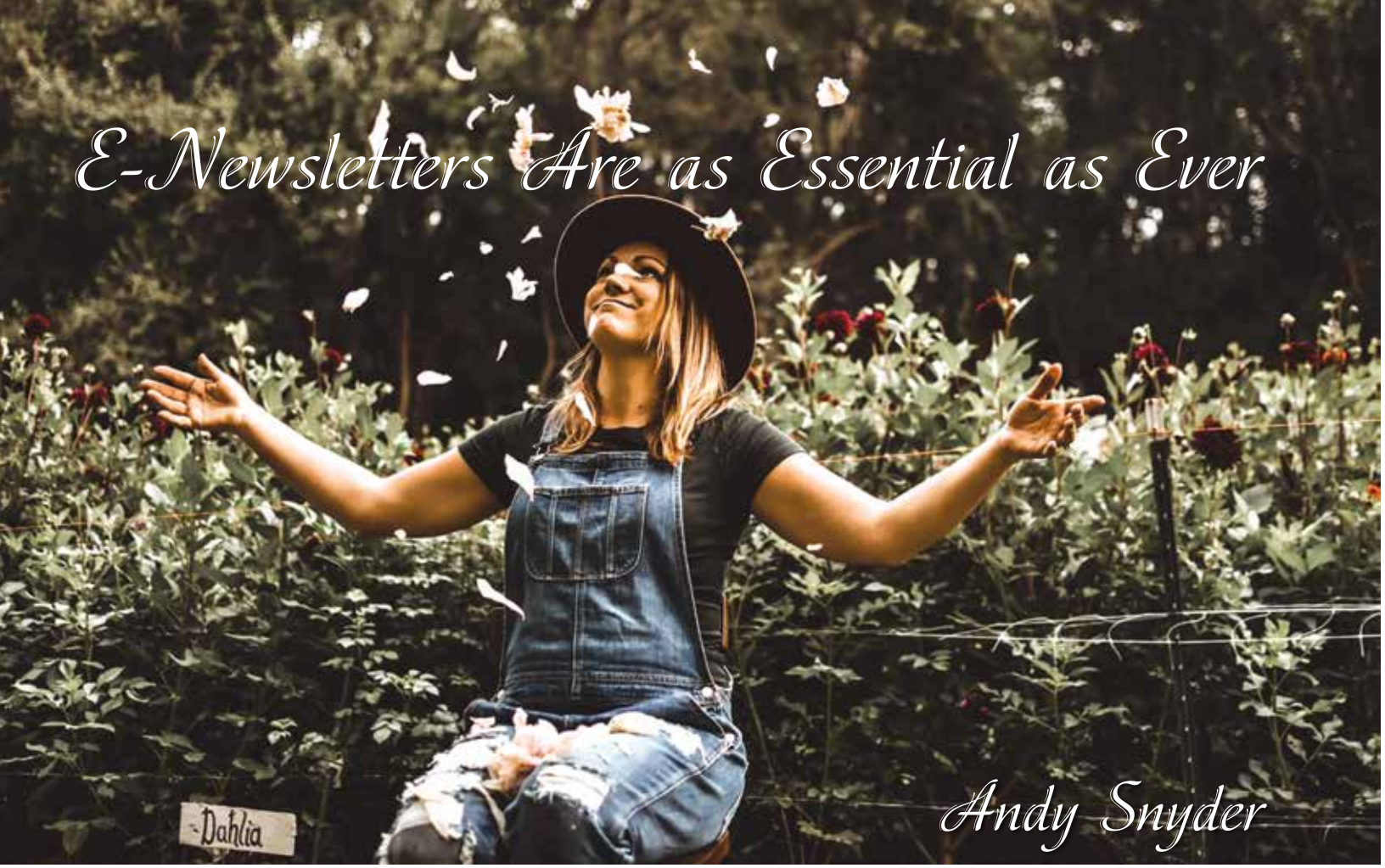

Andy Snyder

If I had to give just one piece of advice to a business owner—new or old—it'd be this: Treat your e-letter like it's one of your greatest assets.

It's more valuable than a tractor… a greater asset than your dahlia bulbs… and even more important than a good irrigation system.

Of course, I'm biased.

I've written, owned or managed e-letters that have, in single mailings, brought in hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales. Done right, they can do this for your business over and over, creating not just a reliable revenue stream, but a tool that can quickly become one of the biggest line items on your balance sheet.

E-letters are quite simple. In fact, the simpler, the better they'll do.

They have a single job—build a relationship with your customers.

There are lots of ways to get it done, but the very best is to simply tell your story. But—and this is critical—you must tell your story in a way that makes it all about the reader.

That's not always easy. But there are some simple tricks to use.

Before we get to them, though, it's critical you understand why an e-letter is so important to a business. Whether you're running a wholesale flower operation, sell your stems at a local market or, like my wife and me, through a busy u-pick field, managing an e-letter must be considered a high-priority project.

Doing the Impossible

Think of it this way. There are essentially three ways for each of us to communicate with our customers—through our advertising, through word of mouth and, the best way, talking directly with them.

When our u-pick field is booming on an early Saturday morning, there's no way we can have a conversation with everybody that comes through the gate. There's no way we can show them behind the scenes and give them the sort of treatment that makes them feel like they're really a part of the operation.

Or what about the person who's heard about your business and has yet to pick up the phone or step through your door? They've got to rely on what they saw or heard in your advertising. Or, even more risky, they must make their decision to spend their dollars with you based on what they heard from somebody else.

That's no good.

Getting that person on an e-letter list is essential to getting them to spend their first dollar.

Many business owners take to social media to build this relationship. That's okay. It's certainly a sales driver and relationship builder. But there are two big flaws with things like Facebook and Instagram.

First, as the content creator and business owner, you're at the whims of the platforms. You don't own what should be a very valuable asset. With a programming change, with a merger or with a slip of the tongue, it's quite possible to lose access to your entire audience.

That would be devastating.

With an e-letter, you own the email list. It's yours. And the value of the names on it adds to the value of your business.

We bring a lot of folks to our field through Instagram. But we build our strongest, most valuable relationships with our e-letter.

The second reason social media can't touch the value of a strong e-letter is that you're constrained by the platform. Through an email, you can show pictures, link directly to your site, send reminders and, when done conservatively, send a very strong sales pitch.

It's that last idea that requires nuance and experience.

One Note...Every Customer

Like I mentioned, I've been writing and managing e-letters for nearly two decades. I've worked on letters that go out to nearly a million people every day. They take teams of folks to run. They generate millions of dollars in annual sales.

The average flower farm will have far fewer folks on its e-letter list. That's okay. Even a list of just a few dozen folks can be quite valuable—if they're the right folks and you talk to them the right way.

Remember, the ideal way to talk with our customers is one-on-one.

Who hasn't sat and talked with a shop owner and walked away a committed customer for life? We can all remember a time when somebody said, "Ooh… if you like that, you've got to come back here and see this."

That personal touch, the added attention, make customers understand how much you care about them and how passionate you are about your business. But I couldn't possibly show our new irrigation setup to every avid gardener that stops by. And I could never walk into the lisianthus patch and detail our support system.

I bet you've often thought that you'd love to show a valued customer something they'd be interested in, but you didn't have the time.

You can do it with an e-letter.

In less than an hour a week, you can lead your very best customers on a unique, backstage tour of your business. Show them what's in bloom. Show them how you're doing it. Show them what has you so excited…or so frustrated.

Tips of the Trade

A good e-letter is like a seasoned sitcom. It has a recurring cast of characters. It has a hero (Hint: it should be your products and your customers.). It has an enemy. It has a continuing plot that runs throughout the season. And it has a new and fresh "mini-plot" in each issue you write.

In our e-letter, I often describe a lone blue heron that flies across our farm several times a day. You should see and hear the excitement from our readers when he flies over the field. They feel like they know him personally.

Here's the really great part about a well-managed, well-written e-letter—it's the ultimate sales tool. But it's not only a sales tool.

You should not have a sales pitch in every letter. Some folks try it, but they don't last long.

Again, remember a time when a shop owner took you for a tour. If she simply went from one spot to the next trying to get you to buy another product, you'd look at your watch and quickly make an excuse to leave.

But if she showed you only how things work, and the behind-the-scenes things that aren't for sale, she would certainly build enough goodwill and trust to pitch a product and get an eager taker.

"Oh, wow, check this out," she'd say. "If you like that, this is exactly what you need."

She could start walking to the register and most folks would have their money on the counter by the time she got there.

There are all sorts of ratios for the right amount of storytelling to the right amount of sales. I don't follow them. It depends on what each of us is selling and what sorts of stories we're telling. But because we all like order and numbers to follow, never send out more than one sales pitch for every four "no-sale" pieces.

Keep it Simple

And, finally, here is my absolute, number 1 piece of advice…

Always, always, always stick to just one idea in each letter.

Don't start the essay writing about how great your dahlias are, then meandering over to last week's big storm and then wander over to how bright the snapdragons are this week. Imagine

trying to follow a 30-minute sitcom with multiple plots. Folks won't tolerate it.

Stick to one idea in each letter.

It's even more important when it comes to finally making that sales pitch. Don't offer three different things. Stick to one subject and hit it hard.

It takes years to master the craft. That's true of anything worth doing right. But with some simple tricks and a bit of knowhow it's quite easy to start an e-letter that will quickly become one of the most-valuable assets within your business.

If you already have one, great. What can you do to improve it?

If you don't already have one, start it today. You'll have a better business tomorrow because of it.

A good e-letter is a very valuable asset.

E-Letter Tips of the Trade:

- ☑ Develop a strong "cast of characters".
- ☑ Focus each issue on one single theme.
- ☑ Make the reader and your products the hero.
- ☑ Email at least once each week.
- ☑ Don't be too "salesy"; minimum one sales piece per four "no-sale" mailings.
- ☑ Use pictures to engage, but only good pictures.

Andy Snyder and his wife, Loni, own Terra Farms, a popular u-pick farm in southern Pennsylvania. Andy is a full-time writer and copy consultant. He can be reached at andysnyder605@gmail.com

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Research Update: Plant growth promoting bacteria used to control gray mold

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Plant growth promoting bacteria as biocontrol agents

Microorganisms, including bacteria and fungi, play an important role in plant growth and overall health. These microorganisms can be pathogens that cause disease, they can have no effect on the plant, or some can even be beneficial. Plant growth promoting bacteria (PGPB) can benefit plants by improving nutrient availability and plant uptake or increasing tolerance to diseases and environmental stresses. Some PGPB can be used as biocontrol agents for the control of plant diseases such as gray mold, which is caused by the pathogenic fungus *Botrytis cinerea*. We have previously identified several PGPB that can reduce disease symptoms caused by *Botrytis* in petunias (South et al., 2020a). *Botrytis* infects many different crops and can result in large postharvest losses of cut flowers. PGPB are a promising control method for *Botrytis* in cut flowers (Figure 1).

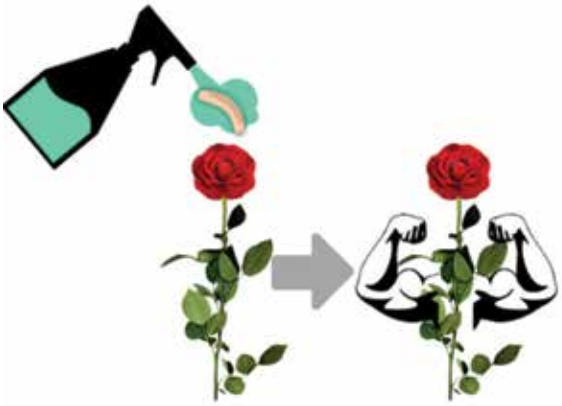

Figure 1. Plant growth promoting bacteria (PGPB) are being evaluated for the biocontrol of fungal pathogens in cut flowers.

Background and Objective

Previously, four beneficial strains of *Pseudomonas* were evaluated for the biocontrol of *Botrytis* in lisianthus (*Eustoma grandiflorum*) cut flowers. Application of *Pseudomonas chlororaphis* 14B11 resulted in reduced disease severity compared to the untreated flowers (South et al., 2020b). The objective of the current study was to evaluate additional PGPB and calcium chloride ($CaCl_2$) treatment for the biocontrol of *Botrytis* in various species of cut flowers.

Treating the flowers with bacteria or $CaCl_2$ (Figure 2)

1. Ranunculus (*Ranunculus asiaticus* 'Elegance Salmon') were obtained from Sunny Meadows Flower Farm (Columbus, OH). The flowers were separated into treatment groups to apply the bacterial and $CaCl_2$ treatments.
2. Each flower was treated with either an individual strain of bacteria (6 total strains) or a 600 ppm solution of $CaCl_2$ using trigger spray bottles. Control flowers were untreated (no bacteria or $CaCl_2$). All bacteria were applied at the same final concentration (10^8 cell/mL).
3. Flowers sat for one day after being treated.
4. Flowers were then inoculated with *Botrytis cinerea* (10^4 spore/mL) using a hand pressure sprayer.
5. The flower stems were cut to 30 cm, placed in vases with deionized water, and covered with plastic bags to create optimal conditions for *Botrytis*. This experiment was set up as a randomized complete block design in an interior room with fluorescent lighting. The average temperature during the experiment was 21.8°C (71.3°F).

6. The flowers were removed from the bags 2 days after the *Botrytis* inoculation and disease severity evaluations began. A rating scale was developed specifically for ranunculus (Figure 3) on a scale from zero (no disease symptoms) to 9 (bent stem and symptoms and signs of *Botrytis* are present OR all petals fell off). Rating for the flowers continued until 6 days after *Botrytis* inoculation.

Table 1. Treatment information

Treatment	Treatment Description
Control	LB growing media only (no bacteria or $CaCl_2$)
$CaCl_2$	600 ppm $CaCl_2$
14B11	*Pseudomonas chlororaphis*
94G2	*Pseudomonas frederiksbergensis*
89F1	*Pseudomonas fluorescens*
MBSA-3BB1	*Pantoea agglomerans*
15H3	*Pseudomonas protegens*
AP54	*Pseudomonas protegens*

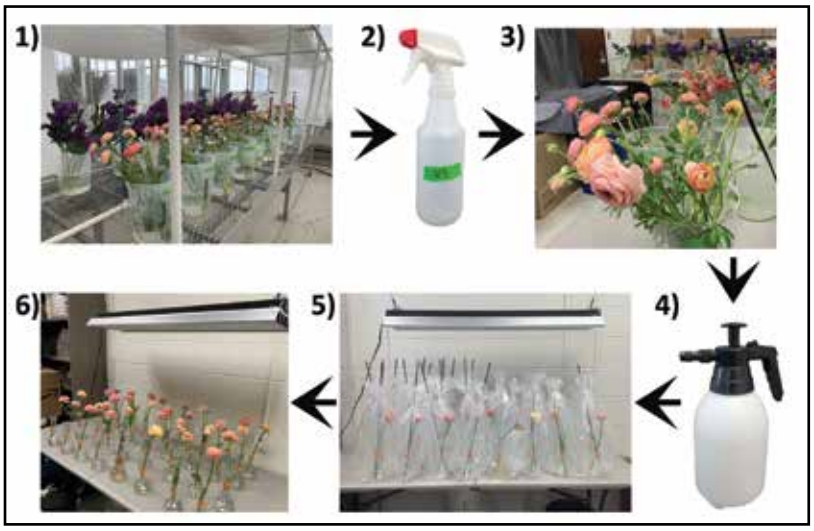

Figure 2. Method used for the evaluation of PGPB for the biocontrol of *Botrytis* in ranunculus.

Figure 3. Flowers were rated daily on a scale of 0 to 9 based on symptoms and signs of *Botrytis*.

PGPB found to reduce disease severity

The daily disease severity ratings were used to determine if disease was reduced in ranunculus flowers treated with one of the PGPB or the $CaCl_2$ treatments compared to the control (untreated) flowers. On day 4, all six bacterial treatments and the $CaCl_2$ treatment reduced disease severity compared to untreated control flowers (Figure 4). The greatest reduction in disease was seen with *Pseudomonas protegens* AP54. $CaCl_2$ and *Pantoea agglomerans* MBSA-3BB1 were the next most effective treatment for reducing *Botrytis* severity. Five days after *Botrytis* inoculation, flowers treated with PGPB strain MBSA-3BB1 had less gray mold and associated damage than the control flowers (Figure 5).

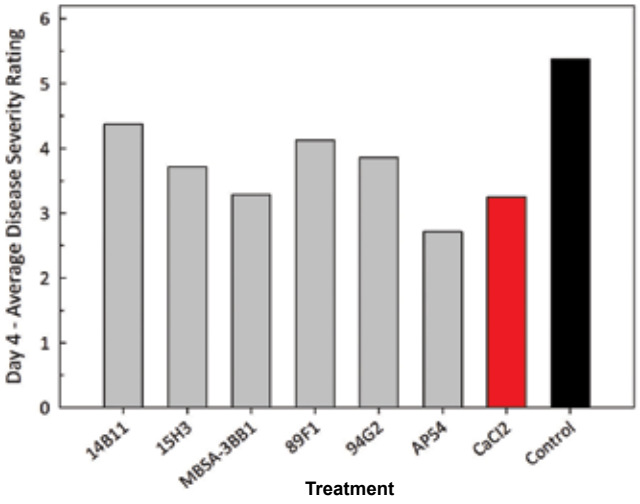

Figure 4. The average disease severity ratings 4 days after *Botrytis* inoculation of ranunculus treated with PGPB or CaCl2. Control flowers were untreated (sprayed with only the LB liquid growing media with no bacteria or CaCl2).

Figure 5. Ranunculus treated with PGPB strain MBSA-3BB1 compared to ranunculus treated with CaCl2 or the control (untreated) 5 days after *Botrytis* inoculation.

Conclusion

The bacterial and $CaCl_2$ applications in this study resulted in a decrease in gray mold caused by *Botrytis* in ranunculus cut flowers. These treatments were also evaluated in stock (*Matthiola incana* 'Katz Purple'). *Pantoea agglomerans* MBSA-3BB1 treatment resulted in the greatest decrease in disease severity compared to the untreated control flowers in the study with stock. Future experiments are evaluating additional application methods to improve the efficacy of the bacterial treatments. PGPB as biocontrol agents provide growers with promising tools for the control of *Botrytis.*

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Tackling the three challenges of dahlia production: bloom timing, nutrient management, and disease

This report is funded by the ASCFG Research Foundation.

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Summary of Need

Dahlias (*Dahlia pinnata*) are widely grown, premium cut flowers in the U.S. Intermountain West, where dinnerplate varieties typically sell wholesale to florists for $3.00 to $5.00 per stem. Once flowering begins, dahlias bloom continuously until frost, thus can provide a long window for harvest and generate significant farm income. In a survey by M. Stock, 87% of cut flower farms listed dahlia as a key summer or fall crop (Utah Urban and Small Farms Conference, 4 Mar. 2020). However, meeting market demand can be challenging, as yields can be low. Dinnerplate varieties begin blooming late, often just weeks before frost, and plant growth can be inconsistent: from stunting to loss in vigor, heavy vegetative growth, or unpredictable flowering.

Moderating Utah temperatures with protected cultivation methods may be key for early and sustained production, as dahlias are a warm-season crop that experience injury below 41°F and above 88°F (Brøndum and Heins, 1993). High tunnels have been used in the U.S. Midwest and northern Great Plains to advance the season (Ortiz et al., 2012; Kluza, 2019), which showed planting nearly one month before last frost increased yield and quality (Kluza, 2019). In addition to high tunnels, low tunnel, and shade may improve production, particularly for microfarms that lack adequate space for high tunnels. Early literature on dahlia indicated shielding plants from intense sun and wind also improved bloom (Johnson and Turner, 1847).

Unpredictable plant growth is a challenge with production that can be caused by soil fertility status or virus infection. The American Dahlia Society (2001) recommends 175 lb nitrogen (N) per acre and found growers tend apply more nutrients than needed, potentially reducing yield up to 25%, while international research suggests 90 to 450 lb N per acre (Sheergojri et al., 2013; Prasad et al., 2018). Therefore, creating regional guidelines is important for long-term soil health and productivity, particularly in the U.S. West, where soils are sensitive to fertilizer application and present challenges for production with elevated pH and salinity, limited organic matter, and excessive nutrient retention (Stock et al., 2020).

Virus infection also reduces plant vigor and production, but sourcing clean stock and identifying infection is challenging. Dahlia mosaic virus (DMV) has been exceptionally prevalent in Utah since testing began in late 2019 (USU, 2021). Plants ranged from asymptomatic, to stunted, to exhibiting mosaics or necrotic lesions. More research is needed to research links to nutrient management, the association of specific symptoms with strains, transmission, and cultivar susceptibility. Making virus testing more available to farms and promoting best practices are needed to improve statewide production.

Goals for Utah dahlias in 2021:

- Trial protected cultivation methods with the use of high tunnels, low tunnels, shade, and mulch.
- Test yield, bloom timing, and soil and plant tissue N levels with five N rates for optimal production.
- Provide free virus testing to Utah farmers and document symptoms.

Procedures and Early Results: A collaboration between the ASCFG, USU Extension, and Western SARE

Protected Cultivation

Protective cultivation methods were trialed at both the USU Agricultural Experiment Station in North Logan, Utah (USDA Hardiness Zone 5, average last and first frosts: 21 May and 25 Sep., 4610 ft elevation), and Wheeler Historic Farm in Murray, Utah (USDA Hardiness Zone 7, average first and last frosts: 08 May and 05 Oct, 4393 ft). In North Logan, high tunnel production was compared to open field conditions with 'Serena' and 'White Pearl' by the dedicated work of undergraduate researcher, Anna Collins, of Dr. Stock's USU Small Farms Lab. The high tunnel was planted on April 27, and the field on May 24. Plastic film covered the high tunnel until late June, at which time it was removed and replaced with 30 % shade cloth.

The high tunnel advanced harvest by 35 days, with first harvest occurring on July 9 in the high tunnel, and August 13 in the field (Figure 1). As of August 27, the high tunnel produced an average of ten stems per plant while the field has averaged six (Figure 1). Quality has also been greater with high tunnel production. The minimum standard for marketability with Utah florists is six inches and undamaged blooms. The high tunnel has averaged five marketable stems per plant as of August 27, the average stem length was 11 inches, with stems lengths ranging from 8 to 34 inches. In the field, harvest has occurred on only two dates, with the first marketable stems harvested on August 27. On average, the field has produced one marketable stem per plant (Figure 1), indicating the benefit of high tunnels in Northern Utah. We expect (hope for!) harvest to continue until the end of September in the field and into October in the high tunnel, when hard frost will end the trial.

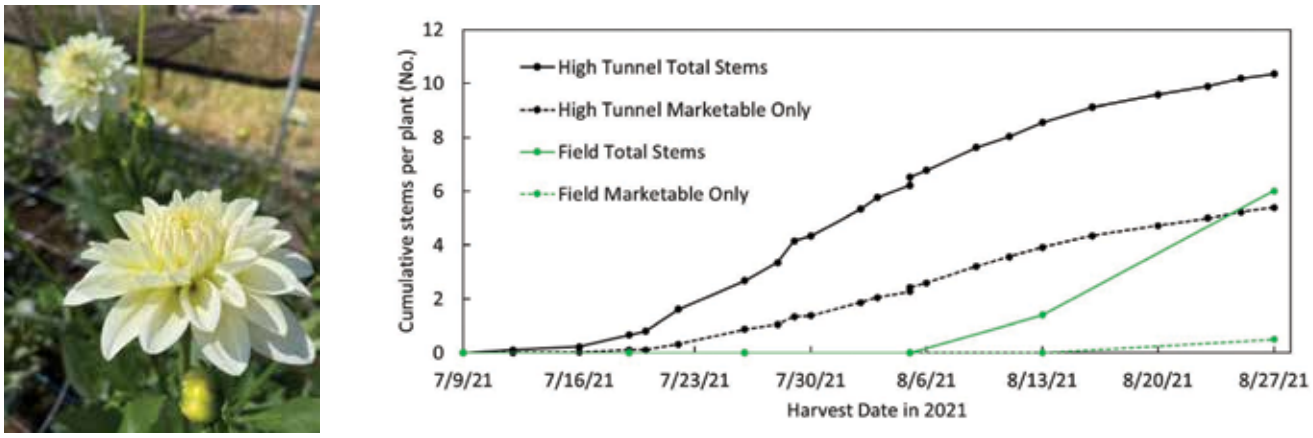

Figure 1. *Left*: 'Serena' grown in a high tunnel in North Logan, UT. *Right:* The cumulative number of stems from 'Serena' and 'White Pearl' harvested from the high tunnel (green lines) and field (black lines). The solid lines represent total stems (marketable quality + cull), while the dashed lines are only marketable stems.

In Murray, the use of low tunnels for shading and mulch was tested. This trial is in Salt Lake County, where the majority of Utah's cut flower farms are located, and represents a much warmer growing area compared to the USU research farm located 100 miles north in North Logan. 'La Luna' tubers were planted on June 1, and 'Café au Lait' cuttings were planted June 9. Planting dates were delayed due to commercial stock and shipping challenges; therefore, low tunnels were tested as shade and wind break structures; not early season advancement. Two practices were then tested: the use of black versus white plastic mulch on the soil, and the use of shade versus no shade on the low tunnel structures. Each combination of mulch and shade was tested, and soil temperature sensors were installed beneath the plastic. The trial has been carefully monitored by Mark Brenneman of Wheeler Historic Farm, and Amanda Pratt, USU Extension Master Gardener and owner of A Lavender Garden.

While we are in the process of collecting and analyzing the data, early visual observations can be shared. Overall, the use of 30 % shade improved plant establishment, which was challenging with the late planting dates and the record heat and drought conditions in Utah during 2021. Black plastic without shade resulted in a loss of 17% of plants, while black plastic with shade resulted in an 11% loss of plants. With the use of white plastic, plant loss was only 6% with or without shade. Harvest of marketable stems began one week earlier with plants grown in white plastic mulch (August 19) compared to black plastic mulch (August 26), regardless of shading treatment (Figure 2). Though harvest has just begun, plants with white plastic mulch and shade have been more productive (Figure 2). We hypothesize the white plastic mulch and shade may have kept conditions cooler and the solar radiation less intense, leading to improved early growth and production. We are eager to continue monitoring production into October and compare total yields with soil temperature data, as well as repeat this study in 2022.

Nutrient Management

A field of 'Café au Lait' was planted on May 24 in North Logan to test five N fertilizer rates (0, 50, 100, 150, and 200 lb N per acre) by research assistant, Eli Oliver, of Dr. Stock's USU Small Farms Lab (Figure 3). To assess N uptake by the plants, the soil was tested prior to planting and will be again after frost-kill for pH, salinity, nutrients, and will be compared to plant tissue samples collected just prior to flowering. Six cut flower farms are also growing 'Café au Lait' with us and have submitted soil samples for testing: we thank Stonehouse Dahlias, Flourish Flower Market, Calluna Flower Farm, Wasatch Blooms, Sego Lily Flower Farm, and Local Roots Flower Farm. For the North Logan field trial, plant growth rates were greater with N application rates of 100 lb N per acre or more. Harvest began on July 27, and the most total and marketable blooms were harvested from plants fertilized at 150 lb N per acre. We expect the field trial to continue through the end of September and look forward to our growers' findings.

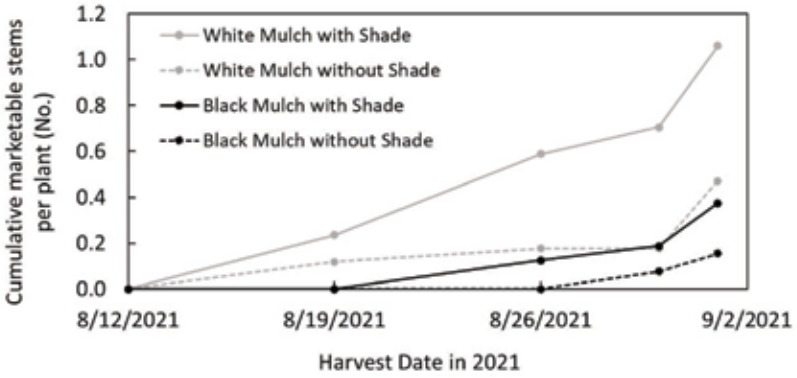

Figure 2. *Top left*: 'La Luna' and 'Café au Lait' at Wheeler Historic Farm in Murray, Utah on August 11, with plastic mulch and shade versus no shade. *Bottom left*: Harvest by Amanda Pratt, USU Extension Master Gardener and owner of A Lavender Garden. *Above*: the cumulative marketable yield with white (gray lines) and black (black lines) plastic mulch, shade (solid lines) and no shade (dashed lines).

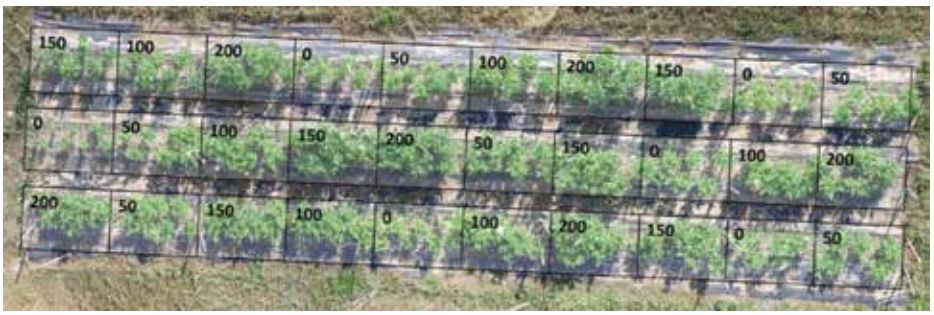

Figure 3. Field of 210 'Café au Lait' plants that are divided into 30 plots that each test one of five N treatments: 0, 50, 100, 150, and 200 lb N per acre.

Figure 4. *Top left:* An example of healthy and productive beds of dahlias grown by Lindsey Waddoups, owner of Three Sprouts Flower Farm in Davis County, Utah, on August 26, 2021. *Top right:* A healthy dahlia leaf with no visual sign of virus infection. *Bottom:* Examples of a stunted plant and mosaic patterns on the leaves of dahlia from across Utah that indicate potential virus presence and warrant laboratory testing.

To determine the prevalence of virus in Utah dahlias, as well as classify plant symptoms by virus and by combination of viruses, we have been obtaining plant tissue samples through collaboration with Utah farmers and dahlia enthusiasts. Samples are tested in the USU Plant Pathology Lab by six committed undergraduate research assistants supervised by Dr. Nischwitz. Please note, our laboratory is restricted to testing samples only from Utah; we do not have permits for out-of-state samples. We continue to be impressed with and very thankful for the strong engagement of Utah growers and their dedication to research in our state.

Collaborating with established farms, and using social media (@usu_smallfarms on IG) to publicize testing to newer farms has been successful in growing our testing program, as well as sharing information on our website (USU, 2021). We posted pictures of what to look for in potentially infected plants, visited farms to collect samples, collaborated with county Extension faculty to scout fields, and have been fortunate to have many growers reach out via email with pictures and mail in samples for testing (Figure 4). Since May 2021, we have obtained 294 samples for virus testing and sample processing is underway. The plant tissue samples represent eight counties across Utah, where cut flower farms are predominantly located. We expect to create a USU Extension fact sheet that details virus incidence and identification for farms and gardens.

We thank the ASCFG for their support of these studies that are in collaboration with USU Extension and Western SARE grants, and the Utah growers who contribute to this research and make us love what we do.

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***Campanula trachelium fl. pl.* Flora Pleno Mix**
This double bellflower is a sturdy, upright plant ideally adapted to all kinds of climatic conditions. Up close, the lovely bell-shaped flowers look like porcelain in detail. Double violet, light blue, and white flowers bloom from July to September. 32 inches tall.

Oriental lily 'Cabella'
A knockout variety is this deep pink Oriental. It is a fade-resistant variety. Dramatic, large, showy flowers and exceptional in its production with wonderful fragrance. Approximately 110 forcing days, and 40 to 44 inches in height.

LA Hybrid 'Lara van Ruijven'
One fantastic-looking orange-flowering lily! We suggest using size 14/16, which will give you 3 to 5 blooms. This lily is named after a famous Dutch short track speed skater. With upright flowers, and a deep rich color tone that does not fade when bloom gets older.

Hydrangea Little Lime Punch™
This has a compact stature and emerging lime-green mophead blooms, but they transition to a festive mix of pink, green, white, and punch-red. All on the same plant! Strong stems and super-prolific, perfect for cuts. Reaches heights/widths of 3-5', USDA zone 3-8.

Hydrangea Fairytrail Bride® Cascade Hydrangea®
Long, trailing stems draped in white lace with bouquets of florets at every leaf node yield a dramatic display. Creates new uses for all kinds of spaces, such as hanging baskets and spilling over rocks. Reaches heights/widths of 4', USDA zone 7-9.

Hydrangea Invincibelle Lace™
Some people adore lacecap flowers for their delicate beauty; others appreciate the pollen for butterflies and bees. 'Invincibelle Lace', the first smooth hydrangea with plum-purple lacy florets, accomplishes both, with strong, wiry stems of a ruby hue that sway gracefully with the wind. Reaches heights/widths of 4-5', USDA zone 3-8.

Hydrangea Let's Dance ¡Arriba!™
Our most prolific, reliable-blooming mophead hydrangea to date. An *H. macrophylla* x *H. serrata* hybrid with large, dense mophead flowers. Rich flower color ranges from hot pink to blue depending upon soil, and age to an attractive mauve pink. Reaches heights/widths of 2-3', USDA zone 4-9.

***Calycanthus* Simply Scentsational®**
The scent of *Calycanthus* actually lives up to the oft-described hints of pineapple and bubblegum. The blooms of this North American native are an intriguing deep maroon and appear in abundance through late spring and summer. Reaches heights of 6', widths of 4-5', USDA zone 4-9.

Hydrangea arborescents Invincibelle Sublime™
Thick, rich green sepals are accentuated with dainty bright pink fertile florets, arranged in large, semi-domed corymbs that hover over deep green foliage. Blooms from head to toe, on super sturdy stems that stand tall in gardens and vases. 3.5-5' tall and wide, USDA 3-9.

Weigela Midnight Sun™
This tidy, bun-shaped weigela features blazing orange and red summer-autumn foliage. Bears pink spring flowers, but the foliage makes it a special addition to any cut flower mix. Its 1-1.5 tall/wide size makes it an easy add to the edges of established cutting beds. USDA 4-8.

Weigela 'Vinho Verde'
Lime green leaves are set off with a bold, black margin. A light crop of red-pink flowers appears in late spring, but the foliage makes it a special addition to any cut flower mix. 3-5' tall and wide and hardy in USDA zone 5-8.

Cosmos ‘Apricotta’
A delicious confection of colors of apricot, peach, and soft rose, Cosmos ‘Apricotta’ is an exciting new introduction. The gorgeous sprays of large, cupped blooms are excellent cut flowers and keep blooming summer to fall frosts. Enrich your garden spaces by nurturing the many beneficial insects and pollinators sure to visit this delectable new cosmos.

Painted tongue ‘Cafe au Lait’
A brand new *Salpiglossis* in a rare and lovely flower hue that is also a good cut flower. Long-flowering in summer areas where nights cool down, 50’s is ideal, they bloom early summer only in warmer areas.

Cornflower ‘Select Ultraviolet’
Our own introduction, Ultraviolet has vibrant purple to violet-blue blooms on pliant stems clothed in silver-green leaves. A great new shade of a favorite cottage garden flower, it is lovely cut, and the edible petals can be added to salads or frozen in perfection inside ice cubes that slowly melt in your summer lemonade.

Mexican sunflower ‘Yellow Torch’
Fluted stems hold the velvety golden-orange petals of this unusual *Tithonia* aloft. Strongly branched and full of blooms all summer, Mexican sunflower is attractive as a hedge, at the back of the border, and cut as a bouquet flower. Deer resistant and sure to attract pollinators, this easy-to-care-for flower attracts birds late in the season for the many seeds that ripen within the cone centers.

Flowering tobacco ‘Bronze Queen’
Smoky brown and purple-red hues in various and interesting combinations make this new variety welcome where a flower’s individuality is appreciated. Long stems hold a spray of flowers.

Giant cactus zinnia ‘Lilac Empress’
Trust us, this flower is vibrant with a capital V! Huge violet-purple flowers with tousled petals bloom all summer long, and the butterflies, including monarchs, won’t leave them alone! An easy and rewarding cut flower.

Lisianthus ‘Celeb 2 Misty Pink’
Celeb is one of the finest new series offered by Sumika, a relative newcomer to lisianthus breeding. I visited their trial in Japan in 2019, and ‘Celeb 2 Misty Pink’ was my favorite. The barely blush pink color is perfect for soft wedding palettes. The breeders developed this strain with the Japanese cut flower market in mind, but I assured them we needed and wanted this in the U.S. Thankfully they agreed, and now we have this stunning variety right here in North America.

Lisianthus ‘Celeb 2 Madonna’
Another exceptional variety from Sumika is ‘Celeb 2 Madonna’. The Celeb series is very productive with tall, fully double flowers. These large “fringe type” lisianthus are the result of decades of breeding, and they are finally realizing their full potential. There are dozens of colors in this series and ‘Madonna’ has to be one of the best with its delicate pink shades.

Limonium ‘Lady Alba’
Your florists will know what tissue culture statice is, but until now it has been hard for smaller American growers to track it down. These superior statice strains are vegetatively propagated using tissue culture techniques rather than grown from seed. Why? Because they are bigger, taller, fuller flowered, and FAR more productive than seed-grown strains. When happy you can expect 15 or more usable stems per plant. ‘Lady Alba’ is a pure white, and is just one of the many strains we are proud to offer from Dümmen Orange.

Scabiosa ‘Scoop Bon Bon French Vanilla’
Ever since we helped bring the original Scoop series to U.S. growers a few years ago, Danzinger has continued to wow us with more variations on a theme. The Bon Bon series is the newest development, boasting sphere-shaped blooms that don’t drop their pollen, and last even longer than their long-lasting counterparts. ‘French Vanilla’ is just one of the new colors available.

Ptilotus ‘Matilda’
Many of us have tried the smaller-statured ptilotus ‘Joey’ as a cut, and wished it were taller. At long last a tall version has made it to market! Ptilotus ‘Matilda’ can reach nearly 3’ tall and loves hot and dry conditions, as you may expect from an Australian native. From the breeders at Benary.

Kale 'Crane Ruffle White'
A new series, Crane Ruffle expands Takii's cut flower kale offerings. 'Crane Ruffle White' features lovely ruffled outer green leaves giving way to a white center.

Kale 'Crane Ruffle Red'
With dark outer leaves framing bright red center leaves, 'Crane Ruffle Red' adds drama and texture to arrangements.

Kale 'Crane Ruffle Bicolor'
'Crane Ruffle Bicolor' has a charming pink center, ringed by creamy white leaves followed by green outer leaves, all with ruffly edges. Excellent season extender, as the ruffled heads add interest even when green.

Snapdragon 'Legend White Improved'
Sturdy stems, and dense flower spikes filled with longer flower spikes with 'Legend White Improved'.

Snapdragon 'Legend Yellow Improved'
Longer flower spikes and improved flower quality show off the vibrant yellow of 'Legend Yellow Improved' to perfection. Flowers slightly earlier than original 'Legend Yellow'.

Lisianthus 'Corelli III Blue Improved'
The Corelli series features large double flowers with fringed petals that have a delicate curl. 'Blue Improved' is deeper colored and more stable with an excellent flower shape.

Callistephus 'Nina Plus Pink'
Large numbers of small, semi-double flowers are produced on sprays, early flowering. The Nina series features more disease resistance than other varieties. 'Pink' is a new addition to this series.

Lisianthus 'Corelli III Lavender'
'Lavender's' petals are beautifully fringed, characteristic of the Corelli series; plants produce a stable number of petals with good branching.

Lisianthus 'Arena III White'
Arena selections feature smooth petals on fully double flowers. 'III White' is easy to grow, very vigorous, top flowering with a strong stem. Good vase life.

Baptisia ‘Honey Roasted’
Ten-inch spikes of dark mahogany flowers have bright yellow keels, producing a wonderful bicolor effect. The bushy habit is jam-packed with flowers when it is in bloom early in the growing season. Flowers lighten to yellow as they mature.

Leucanthemum AMAZING DAISIES® Banana Cream II
Flower buds are lemon yellow and brighten to creamy white. Improvements include being more floriferous, holding the yellow color longer, and earlier to start flowering. We recommend 4-6 weeks of vernalization for best performance, although we have observed flowering without vernalization. From Proven Winners® Perennials.

Leucanthemum AMAZING DAISIES® Spun Silk
‘Spun Silk’ brings a wild new look to the classic Shasta daisy. Narrow petals with fringed edges create the “spider” look, with 4½” graceful white flowers. The perfect choice for bringing new and interesting texture to the garden. ‘Spun Silk’ requires vernalization to bloom; we recommend 6-8 weeks minimum. From Proven Winners® Perennials.

Clematis ‘Stand By Me Lavender’
This variety has the same performance as ‘Stand by Me’ but with a lavender shade of flowers to join the original’s blue. Dark purple buds open to lavender-purple, bell-shaped, nodding flowers. Attractive cream threadlike seed heads follow. From Proven Winners® Perennials.

Digiplexis 'Falcon Fire'
Digiplexis, a hybrid between hardy *Digitalis* and tender *Isoplexis*, is prized for its incredibly long bloom power, flowering from spring to frost. Deep pink flowers with mango -range interiors are produced on sturdy flower spikes. Compared to 'Berry Canary', the overall color is more orange.

Monarda 'Leading Lady Razzberry'
Bee balm typically bloom in midsummer, but 'Leading Lady Razzberry' leads the way in early summer, flowering earlier and forming a more petite clump than other bee balms. 'Leading Lady Razzberry' produces bright raspberry purple flowers on dark green leaves that have a purple cast. From Proven Winners® Perennials.

Nepeta 'Picture Purrfect'
'Picture Purrfect' has a similar compact height to 'Kitten Around' but has a much broader habit and blooms about two weeks earlier, depending on temperature. Compared to *Nepeta faassenii* varieties, the blue purple flowers are noticeably larger and a bluer tone than average.

Pennisetum PRAIRIE WINDS® 'Lemon Squeeze'
'Lemon Squeeze' behaves like other fountain grasses but boasts chartreuse gold leaves. One of the best for vigor that we've seen in gold-leafed pennisetum. Copper panicles appear above the foliage in midsummer and provide additional interest to this three seasons grass. From Proven Winners® Perennials.

Phox LUMINARY™ 'Backlight'
Joining the other members of the LUMINARY™ Collection, 'Backlight' brings a highly sought-after flower color. Pure white flowers are produced in well-defined panicles at the top of a perfect habit. The dark green leaves resist mildew that often plagues tall garden phlox. From Proven Winners® Perennials.

Sedum ROCK 'N GROW® 'Back in Black'
New to the ROCK 'N GROW® collection comes an upright sedum with near black leaves. Enjoy the dark leaf foliage throughout the summer, and when late summer rolls around, flowers with deep garnet red centers and cream petals will appear. Their stout, sturdy stems support the massive flower heads. From Proven Winners® Perennials.

***Celosia cristata* Asuka Select Series**
This series features brilliant colors, on mid-size convoluted fan-shaped combs with distinct attractive fuzz on the underside, clean deep green foliage, strong stiff stems, and tolerance to botrytis. Earlier and wider flowering than most others of this type. The green variety in this series is the most intense yet seen. 32" field, 48" greenhouse.

***Celosia cristata* 'Unlimited Coral'**
Very large bright coral combs with a span up to eight inches. A great eye-catcher as a standalone or in large-scale arrangements. Extra-sturdy stems carry the blooms upright with no problem. Harvest can begin after 12-16 weeks of cultivation. Can plant in greenhouse from mid spring to late summer for harvest from late spring to late fall. 4-5 feet.

***Dianthus* x *barbatus* 'Rockin' Rose'**
First-year flowering, long-lived perennial. Luminous rose pink. Durable, lacy, fragrant flowers crowd in clusters atop lushly branched plants. Lots of color on a very sturdy frame. 18" spreading 10" pot, 24" spreading 12" in the garden.

***Echinacea purpurea* 'Paradiso Super Duper'**
First-year flowering. First double-flowered echinacea from seed. Doubleness develops progressively as blooms mature. Several layers of warm lilac-pink surround a central tuft of small soft green petals. 24" container, 32" garden.

***Orlaya grandiflora* 'QIS White Finch'**
Larger, broader outer petals than common strains, provides showier presentation in arrangements. Big, fragrant lacy umbels of pure white flowers. Strong cutting stems and long vase life. A fine, easy-growing field-grown specialty. Beautiful as filler or massive arrangement, and capable of dominating a landscape planting. 28".

***Rudbeckia hirta* 'Double Golden Daisies'**
Extra-large flowers, 5-6" across. A high percentage are fully double globe-shaped forms. Golden yellow. 30".

***Trachelium caeruleum* 'Supreme Early White'**
Brilliant white flowers. Bred for rapid bud formation. Very uniform, with large, decorative umbels on well-branched plants. Stems bear a large central cluster with smaller umbels below on side branches. 30-32".

American marigold 'Devi Deep Gold'
SD; Extra-large 4-5.2" flowers are ball shaped, very firm. Branches low to provide good stem length. Yields up to 8-12 blooms per plant depending on pinching. Well-suited to garland, vase or bouquet markets. 36" spreading 22" LD, 18" spreading 12".

American marigold 'Sumati Orange'
Large 3 ½ -4", super firm bright orange flowers. Adaptable to year-round production, with strong tolerance for heat and disease. Long shelf life. Durable in transport. Yields of up to 50 stems per plant have been recorded in good growing weather. 40" spreading 22" LD, 24" spreading 15" SD.

Delphinium 'Jenny's Pearl™ Pink'
A unique look for a delphinium, with 1.5" pink flowers, and narrow, lacy, green leaves. Produces stems of 20-25" with branching sprays that have excellent vase life. Color is stable even in higher production temperatures. Flowers first year from transplant. Perennial, F1, 120 days.

Delphinium 'Jenny's Pearl™ Blue'
A unique look for a delphinium, with 1.5" blue flowers, and narrow, lacy green leaves. Produces stems of 20-25" with branching sprays that have excellent vase life. Color is stable even in higher production temperatures. Flowers first year from transplant. Perennial, F1, 120 days.

Marigold 'Xochi™ Orange'
These large blooms, with deeper orange coloration than previous commercially available, measure 3-4", grow on stronger stems that are 24-36". Uniform and durable for use in bouquets and grower bunches. Annual, F1, 80 days.

Matricaria 'Vegmo Single'
This matricaria is fast to mature and can be easily grown as successions during many parts of the year. Produces small daisylike flowers. Cuts hold up well to postharvest handling and make an excellent filler flower. Flowers first year from transplant. Tender perennial, OP, 100 days.

Celosia 'Sunday Red'
Best suited for greenhouse/high tunnel production but can be planted outdoors. Full plumes and long stems make for a great professional cut flower. Long vase life.

Dianthus 'Sweet Rose Magic'
A top-notch filler that features large, long-lasting blooms on strong 18- to 36-inch stems. Flowers open white, change to pink, and then mature to a rich rose for a tricolor look. Flowers first year from transplant. Tender perennial, F1, 90 days.

Delphinium 'Guardian Blue'
Offers intense blooms of blue with purple shading and is up to 6 weeks faster to bloom from transplant than OP types, with excellent stem length and blooming uniformity. Flowers first year from transplant. Perennial, F1, 115 days.

***Panicum capillare* 'Frosted Explosion'**
Adds a delicate texture to any bouquet. Easy to grow with airy plumes that dry well. Can be harvested early when seed pods are green and later when the plumes turn bronze. Facultative short-day flowering requires 14 hours of light to achieve stem length. Annual, OP, 90 days.

Snapdragon 'Potomac™ Dark Pink'
'Potomac Dark Pink' replaces 'Rose' with more uniform flowering and an improved bud taper in this popular series. Plants produce tall, strong stems of 39 to 60 inches, and long spikes of high flower quality. Annual, F1, 110 days.

Basil 'Everleaf Thai Towers'
Long, dark purple stems and thick, dark green, waxy leaves bring a unique texture and fragrance to cut flower arrangements and bouquets. Produces stems of 24 to 36 inches on well-branched columnar plants. Annual, OP, 65 days.

Freesia ‘Cherise’
A beautiful double-flowering freesia, the pink color will not fade, but keeps during its entire vase life! The numerous side stems per plant are valuable for the cut flower grower. It has a wonderful fragrance as well.

Freesia ‘Charlotte’
A new single blue variety in the BEACH® assortment. It is a week faster than the current freesia assortment. It is a gorgeous blue and has a large size flower. This variety will produce a lot of stems and is ideal for planting in later spring.

Tulip ‘Apricot Pride’
A beautiful blush pink. A Darwin hybrid that can be used for early and mid season. Elegant is a word that best describes this tulip!

Freesia ‘Alice’
A new single, hot pink variety in the BEACH® assortment. It has a long crest with many flowers. This is a good variety to plant in the spring for fall production. It produces straight stems with good production.

Tulip ‘Milkshake’
An improvement in the pink segment for tulips. This Triumph tulip is a nice tall addition. Does really well for soil culture and will produce taller stems for the cut flower grower. Flowering for mid to later season.

Dahlia ‘Jowey 15-01’
This is a newer introduction in Joweys dahlias. A welcome addition in the color pink. Joweys are known for solid production and performance.

Roselily 'Larissa'
A gorgeous Roselily that is close to a Sorbonne. Buds color really well and do not open very fast. We see a great future in this variety since it gives length and keeps its color well. In warmer summer temperatures the buds stay upfacing. It is also one of the faster varieties in the Roselily line.

Roselily 'Ramona'
Exciting that we have improvement coming in white Roselilies. 'Ramona' is one of them. A nice grower with good height and plant build. Good bloom count and pure white flower.s An exciting addition to the Roselily assortment.

LA Lily 'Menton'
This newer variety produces a gorgeous peach-colored flower. It produces great from 12/14 or 14/16 size bulbs and is medium to tall in height. A specialty color lily without the strong fragrance that will work for many events.

Calla 'White Art'
This is a vast improvement for pure white callas. A solid producer with medium to tall stems. Flowers are pure white with a nice cup shape.

Veronica 'Skyler® White Improved'
With an exceptionally tall spike, and no need for vernalization, the Skyler series towers above other varieties. New White Improved has a shorter crop time, higher yield of quality stems, and a better match in production to the Skyler Blue and Pink varieties. You will benefit from the improved stem quality and efficiency when harvesting your crop. NEW 2021/22

Craspedia 'Paintball® Poppy'
We love the unique texture that craspedia brings to any arrangement or bouquet. This new variety showed a higher yield in in the product development trials and better performance in stressful conditions. The Paintball series leads the market in uniformity of production with strong stems ideal for cut flower growers. NEW 2021/22

Scabiosa 'Focal Scoop® Blackberry'
New 'Blackberry' brings the very popular dark purple color into the Focal Scoop series. Focal Scoop is leading the market in cut flower scabiosa with the largest flower size, over 3 inches in diameter, on long, sturdy stems. They make a statement as a focal flower or filler in bouquets. NEW 2021/22

Kale 'Crane Ruffle Rose'
'Crane Ruffle Rose' brings in a new ruffled leaf type into a well-known, high-quality cut flower Kale series. The Crane Ruffle types, are more vigorous than the round leaf Crane varieties, this should deliver longer stem length for your production. NEW 2021/22

Sunflower 'Cooper'
'Cooper' is a sunflower with a double layer of thick, golden yellow petals. It has a shorter cycle than many competing varieties, saving you time and money in production. The flowers tend to open upwards, perfect for showing the flower in bouquets and arrangements. NEW 2021/22

Lisianthus ‘Rosanne 3 Brown’
We love the new ‘Rosanne 3 Brown’, ideal for later season production when you are looking for a unique color to stand out! The full, double flowers with sturdy petals on strong stems ensure good transportability without damage. Vase life is excellent and the trendy colors make fantastic bouquets. NEW 2021/22

Dianthus ‘Sweet Neon Purple’
‘Neon Purple’ is a new color option for the series. Flowers are the brightest purple we have ever seen in trials, great to add neon splashes of color in your bouquets. The Sweet series is versatile and programmable; no vernalization needed and is best for cooler production seasons. NEW 2021/22

OT lily ‘Orange Emperor’
‘Orange Emperor’, a new introduction from the Van Zanten breeding line, is an OT hybrid with striking electric orange flowers. This flower is a definite showstopper. Pictures cannot capture the vibrant colors of this flower. This variety is 36 inches tall and takes 13-14 weeks to force. NEW 2021/22

Oriental lily ‘Aubisque’
‘Aubisque’ is the new introduction from the Van Zanten breeding line of double pink Oriental lilies. This flower has many petals—more than most of the doubles on the market today. In the cut stage every bud will open. This variety is 36 inches tall, and takes 15-16 weeks to force. NEW 2021/22

Dahlia ‘Tyrell’
This new variety interweaves a blush peach with a light hint of soft rose on large flowers eight inches in diameter. Limited availability for this coming season. NEW 2021/22

Anemone Mona Lisa Mix Improved
The improved Mona Lisa Mix is reformulated for a better balance of all colors in the series, it now includes the recently improved Deep Blue and Orchid Shades, as well as Pink, Red Bicolor, Scarlet Eye, White and Wine White Bicolor. This seed option is a great alternative to corms. Lower temperatures (46 to 54°F) promote optimum stem length. Seed available starting April 2021.

Limonium QIS Mix Improved
Improved for uniformity of flowering and germination performance, QIS Mix Improved contains Dark Blue, Pale Blue, Rose, Yellow, and White. Apricot was removed from the mix because it has a different habit and flower timing. Apricot is still available as a separate color, but it is not included in the mix. Seed available starting October 2021.

Campanula Campana White, Deep Blue, Lilac, Deep Blue, Pink
We have a new pelleted seed form that is more efficient and effective; delivering higher quality germination and young plant uniformity. This new pelleted seed form is available on all 4 varieties of campanula Campana starting in October 2021. The Campana series is known for high quality stems with larger, showier flowers than others on the market. Seed available starting October 2021.

Celosia 'Sunday Green'
'Sunday Green' is a new, icy green color for the series, giving growers an option for a trendy chartreuse filler flower for summer programs. The Sunday series is a high quality cut flower with longer stems than garden type, plumosa celosias. If stem length is a problem in your celosia production, try the Sunday series. Seed available starting October 2021.

Proven Performance.

LUMINARY™ 'Opalescence'

Phlox *paniculata* TALL GARDEN

This new Tall Garden Phlox for Proven Winners Perennials boosts well-formed panicles of bi color pink flowers. Improved mildew resistance ensures performance throughout the year. Zones 3-8.

WaltersGardens
Premium Perennials. Rewarding Results.

NORTHEAST

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont

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We were delighted to host an ASCFG Farm Tour here at our place in Vermont in mid-August. I've been feeling cut off from my flower family since COVID came to town. People are what make the ASCFG such a valuable organization, so having a group of 40 growers right in front of me was a real treat.

Throughout my farming career I have grown just about everything there is to grow and tried to sell it to every outlet in every way imaginable. We have sold retail at farmers' markets, sold to florists, sold to wholesalers, sold to DIY brides, offered wedding design services, and hosted floral-themed events on our farm. We have responded to the successes and failures of each of these attempts, and have ruthlessly taken an axe to our production list; what remains is the farm we see today. It's an odd lineup, but it works for us.

This season we are mainly growing sweet pea seeds for retail sales, hosting a few on-farm events, and selling cuts from our 3-acre planting of woody and herbaceous perennials to a tiny list of wedding florists. Living in the poorest and least populous county in the state has its challenges. We used to drive our flowers further afield, but there are probably 30 flower farms between us and Burlington, Vermont (our state's biggest city with a whopping population of 45,000 people). It's just not worth the 2-hour drive to get our product to an already saturated market.

A few years ago there were far more untapped markets than there are today. At that time there was a widely circulating notion that the cut flower market was endless and that we were all going to get rich and it was going to be relatively easy. Sadly, I still see people selling this pipe dream.

I set aside a portion of the Farm Tour day to tell our story and to be clear on what has worked and not worked for us. Another portion was devoted to a group discussion about a wide range of growing and marketing issues. I come from a long line of preachers, so when faced with a crowd of mostly new, very eager cut flower growers, what was I going to preach about? I want to encourage and support (that's what the ASCFG is all about), but I don't find joy or value in setting people up for failure. The following were the main points of my sermon.

Flower farming is not easy or necessarily profitable. Each tour attendee was asked to submit anonymous questions for the group discussion section. My favorite was "How do I make the most money with the least amount of work?" I giggled when I read this, but isn't it the question we all ask ourselves each day? To be clear, there is still money to be made in this business, even for new growers, but nobody is standing around with a fistful of cash waiting to shove it in your pocket in exchange for a bouquet of short-stemmed, half-dead, bug-eaten flowers. Sorry to burst your bubble.

Quality sells. Before knocking on your first door or even trying to start selling, you need to have figured out how to grow a good quality product. If you don't know what good quality is, you need to learn. Imported flowers are bad-mouthed quite often, but the one thing they do have going for them is quality. The largest remaining untapped market in this business is selling to retail, event, and wholesale florists, so take time to educate yourself on what those imported stems look like and what price they sell for. The best way to do this is to get a job working for a florist. Wedding florists have been strapped for help this season, and retail shops always need help on Valentine's and Mother's Days. A firm grasp of the floral industry will serve you well as your career unfolds.

You don't need to grow everything. My first year I planted a little bit of everything and I planted too much of it. I couldn't weed it all, the quality was mediocre, and more than half of what I planted didn't get cut or sold. I would have been better off growing half as many varieties on half as much ground but doing it well. Had I carefully studied 10 crops and given them exactly what they needed I would have had more and better flowers to sell than I did by just winging it and jamming everything in the ground. Now that we have our key crops locked down we tinker a bit each season with a couple of new ones to see if we can grow them successfully and if

they will sell to our market. If you can grow something well once, you can probably do it again.

There is value in specialization. Internationally, most professional flower growers produce just 1 or maybe 2 kinds of flowers, but they grow on a large scale. In Holland, for example, you may find a grower that has grown roses and only roses for generations, and in fact they may grow only red roses, and make millions doing it. Developing this kind of expertise can help you tap into larger markets, especially if you can supply this crop with consistent quality and availability. This has been our approach with sweet peas. They like our cool climate, few people have mastered their culture, and I like them. I never tire of looking at them, breeding them, touching them, and propagating them. You are fortunate if you can find this kind of long-term committed relationship to a cut flower crop.

Each tour attendee was asked to submit anonymous questions for the group discussion section. My favorite was "How do I make the most money with the least amount of work?" I giggled when I read this, but isn't it the question we all ask ourselves each day?

The plants are the boss. I grew better flowers once I realized that I work for them, not the other way around. Plants are selfish and think about only themselves. If you let your tray of plugs get bone dry because you were too busy to notice, you can't sweet-talk them back into living by apologizing and explaining to them how busy you've been. Even a day or two of plant stress can result in a poorer quality product in the end. The goal is to give your plants perfect conditions every day. If your research ability starts and ends with asking a question to a group of unqualified strangers on Facebook, I question your dedication. Every crop has clearly defined parameters in which it will succeed, and this information is widely available. Let me be clear, *this information is more available now than ever before in the history of humankind*. Read culture sheets, read books, and search ASCFG resources or ask other trusted resources. Once you commit to providing a crop exactly what it needs it will reward you with exceptional quality. If you have declared yourself a farmer, this is quite literally your job now. Treat the plants well and they will support you.

Don't be afraid to garden. We Americans have lost the art of having a hobby. We feel the need to monetize everything. I suspect a good number of ASCFG members would probably be happier gardening than trying to grow for profit. A well-tended cut flower garden can be a thing of pride and beauty. Keep an open mind about your venture as it develops, and be willing to move some crops into the garden and out of commercial production.

The biggest point I drove home was how valuable the ASCFG has been for me and our business. We wouldn't have a flower farm without it. All of the resources necessary for success are available to members at any time. Members have been exceedingly supportive and generous with their information through the years, and I am trying to keep that spirit of generosity alive. Is flower farming easy? No. Is it always profitable? No. Is it worth the effort? Absolutely.

MID-ATLANTIC

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia

Michelle Elston
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What Crops Work for Your Farm? Evaluating and Tracking New Crops.

It seems fitting to talk about our farm's crop tracking systems for the New Varieties issue of the *Quarterly.* Roots has been an ASCFG varieties Trialer since 2014. The plant geek in me absolutely loves trying, comparing, and ruthlessly eliminating different crops. I find it's important to first review my criteria for what to grow. We are limited on land, so choosing top performers is essential to our profitability. I consider my market. Designers want fancy colors, new varieties—and are willing to pay a premium. Supermarkets want longevity, bright colors, and low price. And I consider my climate. Several seed suppliers and influencers are located in very different regions than mine; I've so often tried their suggestions only to be sorely disappointed. It's hard to not get sucked into every flashy new thing, but you can lose a lot of time, money and space!

Here is a bit of my system for tracking new crops and determining what to grow:

1. My crop plan is the heart of my planning for my farm. It's a massive Excel document, with tabs for seeding schedules, field maps, and task lists by month. Each year, I copy last year's document and rebuild it as the next year's plan. I keep this document in Dropbox so I can access it on any device. Using Google Sheets or similar would also work well.

2. I love paper and clipboards! I print copies of the pages of the crop plan for transplant seeding and direct-seeded crops, plus a summary of all trial crops. These clipboards live either in our seeding room or hung from my desk in the barn. There is always extra paper to make notes, plus columns for things like actual dates and numbers. Anyone may write on these.

3. Anything that is a trial crop gets highlighted every place on the crop plan. These may be ASCFG Trial cultivars or just other things I am curious about. When things are seeded that are highlighted, that signals to the seeder that they must mark those crops to be tracked by using a neon label.

4. At transplant time, anything that has a neon label gets flags with names that go into the row. Each field map has a "front" and the flag must be placed at the front of that crop. We use the neon flags on wire stems that people often mark invisible dog fences with.

5. If the crop is a staked and netted crop, we then tie neon flagging tape with the name onto the net, using similar protocol as above.

6. We find it best to plant test varieties right alongside the same type of plant of our tried and true crops. For example: we already know the marigolds we love. Putting a test variety beside them gives us immediate comparison on time to bloom, height, productivity, etc.

7. I make so many notes! The important thing is to just get them down somewhere during the chaos of the season. You can integrate them later. I make: paper notes on any of the aforementioned clipboards, notes voice texted into my phone's "notes" page, and notes in the Excel crop plan, either on the seed-starting page or on the field map page. It just must go in the line with the crop.

8. I make two types of notes: 1) Big picture. What is missing in terms of form, color, or abundance during certain times of year? What colors do we have too much of? For example, how can we balance that two-week period in June when everything is yellow and white? 2) Comparative notes. These are very important when evaluating varieties of existing crops on your farm. Time to bloom, productivity and yield, vigor and disease resistance, vase life, and ease of harvest are all important factors.

As with anything, this takes time and dedication. But if you pursue it with curiosity, it's just another part of the farming game (you know, that game where the rules change every day?) Best wishes for crop planning this winter!

SOUTHEAST

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee

Val Schirmer
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Want to Hold a Flower Festival in Your Hometown?

Here's how two Georgia members are doing it, and you can too!

I've had the pleasure to attend Georgia's Monroe Blooms Flower Festival in both its inaugural year in 2019, and this year, post-pandemic. Its two founders—Gail Zorn of Daybreak Flower Farm in Loganville, who's also the founder of the Georgia Local Flowers collective, and Stephanie Kilroe, of Dancing Hearts Homestead in Monroe—are the fearless, fun, and imaginative instigators behind this flower takeover of the historic town of Monroe.

I absolutely believe that what they've created is an idea worthy of replicating by like-minded flower farmers in lots of cities, both large and small. If that idea sounds tantalizing, read on! Here is Gail's and Stephanie's advice on what they did, how they did it and, what it takes to be successful.

Our noted speaker and co-founder of the ASCFG, Allan Armitage, and event organizer, Gail Zorn.

Glorious blooms added to a downtown sculpture by farmer florist Jessica Drennan Neese of Field & Flower by In Bloom.

First, what IS Monroe Blooms?

It's a one-day event in Monroe, which is the Walton county seat with almost 15,000 residents. Monroe, and Walton County are considered part of the Atlanta metro area, even though Atlanta is 50 miles away. It's a super fun public celebration of everything floral, while also a celebration of the community. It showcases the historic town, its farmers' market, florists, landscapers, and nurseries. Events included a presentation and book signing by Dr. Allan Armitage, design competitions, workshops of all kinds, Master Gardener demonstrations, flower merchandise, farmers' market, artisan crafts, art exhibits, five astonishing floral displays throughout downtown for photo opportunities, and more.

How did you come up with the idea in the first place?

Stephanie: We were driving back from the ASCFG 2018 National Conference in Raleigh, and Gail said, "What do you think about a flower festival in Monroe?" And we just got going, right from there, brainstorming all the way back home. It was so, so exciting! Originally we were thinking we'd do it in 2020, but Gail got on the phone that same day, calling movers and shakers in city government and they were unanimous: "Let's do it in 2019!"

Gail: Basically, I was looking for a way to 1) Showcase the farmers' market (she was the market manager at the time); 2) Highlight local flowers, which I felt were underrepresented in the Atlanta area; and 3) Bring something totally new and interesting to Monroe.

Okay, great idea, but what did you think would be some of your biggest hurdles?

They quickly ticked off: Budget! We had no idea what kind of budget we'd need. Since this was untested, we were worried about how we'd get buy-in from local businesses, like restaurants. Could we get sponsorships? Volunteers—we needed the right people to serve on the planning committee, and the right boots on the ground for the event.

Gail: The greatest part of this was the unknowns—what we could spend and what the public reaction would be. For us, this was a high-risk but potentially high-reward idea.

Stephanie: We had no template to look at in the state of Georgia. We had to invent this event ourselves. We had a lot of ideas, such as wearable flower art at a dinner show, but we just couldn't do everything the first time, or even the second time.

What were some of the big "pluses" in your favor?

Gail: We had the support of the Office of Economic Development in Monroe, and the Downtown Development Association. (Gail was the farmers' market manager, which is funded by both entities) so I knew the people who could help make it happen.

Celebrating the rainbow by Maggie Hadden of The Petal Exchange, flowers provided by Lara Jackson of Wolfsong Flowers.

Stephanie: And the people Gail called that day were on board immediately—it took no convincing. Since Gail had been the farmers' market manager for a few years, she already had a relationship with all these people; she already had their trust and a proven track record with the market. Relationships like this are key!

The pair also said it was essential that they've had tremendous support from Monroe's premiere florist, Jeff Lott of JL Designs, who's a big booster of Monroe and a much-loved member of the community.

What were the key items on your first checklist/timeline?

Deciding who should serve on the steering committee. Lay out all of the ideas. Throw out the ideas that most likely can't be implemented due to timing, budget or volunteers. Secure space for each of the activities, workshops, events, and displays, and find instructors or a teacher for each. Identify what will need to be purchased or donated, such as florals, getting florists to do pro bono design, items to use in displays, such as flower truck with bedding plants in its bed. Then, they said they worked on the project plan.

Actual time frame to plan the event?

For the 2019 event we came up with the idea in September of 2018. The steering committee meetings began in February 2019. Initially they were held once a month, then every two months, then weekly. Six to eight weeks out, we began advertising Monroe Blooms (including a list of classes, events, and workshops), putting up posters, pushed out messages in selected Atlanta zip codes via Facebook to a targeted demographic. The first Monroe Blooms Flower Festival was held June 15.

For 2021, the steering committee meetings began in later April due to uncertainties related to COVID ("Could we even hold a large event?"), so the timeline was much more condensed than in 2019. It worked because they now had buy-in from the community: in their post-event analysis—a key component to measuring the impact of the event—local businesses reported higher sales which they said were directly related to Monroe Blooms. In fact, Jeff Lott said his store did three times its normal Saturday business. The second Festival was held on June 19.

What did you learn in 2019 to improve for 2021?

- Close the main thoroughfare through town.
- Get a professional photographer. Jamie DeRevere, of DeRevere Photography donated his time and expertise.
- We wanted to have more events and classes, although potential barriers were the logistics of space and finding teachers in our shortened timeline.
- Much better social media push in 2021.
- They realized in 2019 that they didn't have enough bench depth in flowers, using local flowers and local wholesale flowers. In 2021, they couldn't get donations from local wholesalers due to the pandemic, and that's when Gail came up with the idea of pairing a local florist with a local flower farmer and they used EXCLUSIVELY local flowers.
- Paired up flower farmers (who weren't already paired with a florist) to do a workshop.
- Added Flower Queens, which were a BIG hit (their paper flower costume design was the brainchild of Gail's sister, Lynn).

What would you like to do differently next time?

• Dream bigger! Gail sent everyone on the planning committee links to the 3-day flower show in Greenwood, South Carolina, and the Philadelphia Flower Show

• Create and distribute minutes of planning meetings with commitments made during the meeting, which will help them track action items and commitments for the next meeting

• Start everything earlier!

• A dedicated tent for speakers.

• More music.

• Have a budget. While the city of Monroe paid all receipts, there has not been an upfront budget.

• Add an event website.

• Reach out to the producers of the "Small Town Big Deal" television show.

• Get more sponsors.

• Add garden tours over the weekend, to expand Monroe Blooms beyond a one-day event.

• Add an evening component, such as a restaurant with a flower theme, with volunteers wearing flower art.

For anyone contemplating trying something similar in their town, what do you think it takes to be successful?

Gail: Cultivate relationships; have a vision; dream BIG; you'll need drive, persistence, the ability and diplomacy to work with many personalities.

Stephanie: Involve all the civic groups who would like to have more exposure (remember, it's their town too!) and tie them into the event. Examples of who they included:

• Monroe Walton Center for the Arts (MWCA); a member of the MWCA did the festival's poster both years pro bono and the center held classes for kids and adults during the festival.

• The Farmers' Market held events specific to the festival.

• Monroe Museum.

• Onstage Theatre, which provided story times throughout the festival.

• Master Gardeners.

• Local historic homes and venues.

Any final pieces of advice?

Gail: This is a VERY scalable event that can be replicated in ANY size town! Just pick your components based on what your target demographic would like, and your dream of what you'd like to do.

Stephanie: Don't be afraid to dream BIG! Always have a Plan A, a Plan B, and a Plan C. And ALWAYS have a sense of humor!

Getting to Know Gail and Stephanie

Gail Zorn, of Daybreak Flower Farm, has been in business since 2010, first growing a patch of zinnias to put a little something extra into her farmers' market booth, where she was selling bread. Growing flowers was right up her alley, though, as she was a horticulturist and grounds director for a community college. Now she sells exclusively to florists, with about three-quarters of an acre under cultivation with perennials and annuals.

Stephanie Kilroe, Dancing Hearts Homestead, started growing in 2017, encouraged by Gail, initially selling online to local markets. Today she sells primarily to florists, a big retail account, and does special farmers' markets. She grows annuals, perennials and shrubs on a quarter acre, and, as this photo shows, loves drying florals.

Georgia Local Flowers is a collective of mutually-supportive Georgia-based flower farmers, started in 2017 by Gail Zorn to collectively join together as a single business entity that would have the volume and presence to attract florists and designers. It has evolved into a group of like-minded growers who mutually support each other's endeavors in flower farming: growing, pricing, business advice and collaboration. About a dozen members participated in Monroe Blooms.

NORTH AND CENTRAL

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming

Susan Rockwood
Arcola Trail Flower Farm
Susan@ArcolaTrailFlowers.com

It's Time to Reflect on 2021

Every year as the growing season winds down, I try to collect my thoughts and reflect on the year past. It's easy to jump into fall chores and let the busy year fade into memory and blur with past seasons. So I encourage you to reflect now, make notes, and use them to improve your business and/or your life.

Over the past seven years as a flower farmer, I have asked myself some very basic questions. These questions and the answers are critical to new and experienced growers alike and should help you plan for next season.

1. What did I/we do well?

2. What surprised me?

3. What were the crop success and failures and why?

4. What are the must grow crops for next year? What do I want to add?

5. Which crops will be dropped?

6. How do I rate my market outlets (financially, cost/benefit, enjoyment, exposure)?

7. Do I want to expand/drop lines of business and/or add new opportunities?

8. Are there farm improvements, techniques, or investments I need to make next season, e.g. farming practices, soil, infrastructure, staff?

9. What do I want/need to learn over the winter and what are the resources available (workshop, online course, books, etc.)?

10. Are there people I need to thank personally for helping me and for supporting our business—customers, workers, volunteers, florists, friends, and family?

11. Am I (and my family) committed to the 2022 season, and, if so, what needs to be done this winter to ensure success?

Slow Flowers
SOCIETY
We appreciate our members!
Representing all facets of the floral industry, Slow Flowers members ARE the Slow Flowers Movement. As part of Slow Flowers Society, florists, flower farmers, retailers and wholesalers are able to:
attract ideal clients and customers by aligning your business with your values
increase your marketing power with member branding tools and PR opportunities
tell your story through our editorial channels
take advantage of discounts on events and programs from Slow Flowers Society and our partners!
Join the movement today!
slowflowers.com/join

As farmers, we can only try our best to anticipate, plan, and execute our goals each year. We also need to be flexible and realistic since we are at the mercy of Mother Nature and many other factors out of our control.

For example, on September 27, 2020, my husband had a severe stroke which changed my farming plans significantly in 2021. Taking care of him full-time in addition to farming has been a huge challenge. I had to rely on the kindness and generosity of friends, family, and fellow farmers to have a season at all. So this winter I will be spending a lot of time on item number 10 on this list—thanking so many people for supporting us in innumerable ways. It took a village and for that I am forever grateful. "Keep going, keep growing."

SOUTH AND CENTRAL

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana,New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah

Shanti Rade
Whipstone Farm
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What to Do with Dead Stuff

I talked a little bit about dried flowers in the Winter 2021 *Quarterly* (oops, and again in the Winter 2020 issue), but it seems I want to elaborate on the topic again. Dried flowers are still trending, which has to be good for flower farmers everywhere who want to waste less of their flowers and sell more in the off-season. And it's currently what I call "squirrel season", the time of year when you want to save, can, store, preserve, and hoard every last bit of everything before winter sets in and it's all gone for the year. So, I'm currently collecting all my dried bits to get me through winter and I've got dried flowers on the brain.

My new discovery of 2020, when I couldn't seem to make enough time for wreath-making even around the holidays, was to sell curated, themed dried flower boxes. This was not preplanned, so I took what I had dried from the summer and fall and placed them into four color categories, with approximately 8 bunches of dried flowers per collection. Then, of course, I snapped a picture for social media and the website. A key component was to include the caveat that the boxes may contain different flowers than the photo but the color palettes would be the same, providing lots of leeway to get rid of all my dried goods.

The idea behind these boxes was to offer a DIY experience for folks without having to sell each individual bunch. They could make a wreath or a dried arrangement or a wall hanging. I put an insert in the box with a few tips for working with dried flowers and where to get the best supplies, as well as my favorite books and online dried flower inspiration.

As they're non-perishable, dried flowers are very easy to ship. We launched the dried flower collections in December and they sold well during the holidays, and then surprisingly kept selling throughout the year. We shipped them to many different states and had quite a few repeat customers. We even had a few DIY wedding orders. I LOVE that folks are using dried flowers for weddings. Talk about ultimate sustainability.

This year we decided to go big on growing stuff for drieds, not just taking the leftovers to dry when we have them. It's really nice to have a big supply in specific colors to offer. There is a lot of interest for these as well from local designers who already buy fresh flowers from us, so this year, finally, I will actually inventory and put together a dried flower availability list (Well, I have been saying that for three years, so we'll see if it actually happens.).

What I learned this year is how much I love selling the curated boxes, but how annoying it is to put them together a few at a time as orders come in. Sifting through all those totes of dried flowers is annoying and trying to remember what we have and don't or what to substitute gets old. This year we plan to pre-pack all the dried flower collections, then I will know exactly what we have in inventory which will make online sales really easy. They will be ready to ship out as needed with the only work being to print shipping labels. Next year I want to perfect my crop plan specifically with these curated boxes in mind.

Below is the insert verbiage I include with my dried flowers. I know how much work it can be to put your ideas onto paper when you're busy, so feel free to copy any part of this text and adjust to your own needs. I love a good copy and paste when it fits. If you're doing anything unique with drieds I would love to hear about it—please get in touch!

Winter Skies Box

The Neutral Box

The Berry Box

Southwest Sunrise Box

ALL THE DETAILS ON YOUR DRIED FLOWER COLLECTION

Thank you so much for purchasing our dried flower collection. While I am sure you have plenty of ideas for how to use these dried flowers yourself, I thought I would share a few of mine with you.

- Wreaths. These are so fun to make in so many different styles and they make great gifts.
- Vase arrangements from tiny to large placed anywhere around your house (dining table, bathroom, altars, bedside, you get the idea). Use a ball of chicken wire taped to your container if they are top-heavy and having a hard time staying put.
- Dried flower greeting cards. Make two parallel cuts one inch long and a few inches apart in the center of a blank card and insert a mini bundle of dried flowers in the slot. These don't work well to mail in an envelope, but they are fun to gift if passed off by hand, or mailed inside a box.
- Present toppers.
- Fairy houses.
- Swags or bundles hung on the wall. They look great hung upside down, just like you would to dry them.
- To decorate macramé and other crafts.

I have found that dried flowers can be very brittle and are sometimes challenging to work with. If you are making wreaths or otherwise need to manipulate the stems and you find them breaking on you or the petals shatter, I suggest adding a little moisture. Spritz lightly with a spray bottle of water and wait a bit for them to hydrate. Or put them in a refrigerator overnight and allow them to take in some moisture before you work with them. They will dry out again in about a day and be perfectly good. Hair spray also works well as a sealant. It's a good way to help things stick and stay together for the long haul; you can spray it on your arrangement once it's finished. I don't use it (because I don't seem to have any in the house) but I have heard it works well.

Dried flowers will stay their best the longest if kept out of direct sunlight and stored inside. They will last for at least a few years if taken care of; the hardest part is keeping the dust off of them over time. Maybe a little compressed air or a blow dryer will work if they get really dusty. Personally, when my dried flowers get dusty they just match the rest of my house!

If you need some inspiration on how to make a wreath or what to do with dried flowers, check out these sources:

The book *Everlastings* by Bex Partridge.

Online wreath-making tutorial videos from www.3porchfarm.com and www.sunnymeadowsflowerfarm.com. @wreathroom on Instagram has some great tutorials saved in their story highlights. I also love following these accounts on Instagram for dried flower and wreath inspiration @fielddaycreative, @borealblooms, @botanical_tales, and @swallowsanddamsons.

Natural wreath bases can be foraged from wild grapevine, willow, or a number of other plant materials. Pre-made grapevine bases can be found on Amazon or at your local craft store. Brass wreath bases are available on Macramé Superstore (pepperell.com).

My favorite way to bind material to the wreath base is with Oasis bind wire or floral paddle wire, both available at craft stores or online. A hot glue gun is your best friend when you need to attach something that doesn't have a stem or want to cover up a bald spot on a wreath.

I hope you love your dried flowers and thanks for your support. We would love to see what you make: tag us on social media @whipstonefarm and #whattodowithdeadstuff

WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington

Erin McMullen
Rain Drop Farm
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Having never given a formal farm tour to a group, we didn't know what to expect when we agreed to host an ASCFG event on our farm this summer. We were nervous, and excited, to invite fellow farmers out, and to get a chance for some desperately needed community connection.

All told we had about 38 people join us for a summer Rain Drop tour. Our amazing crew pulled off a normal harvest day while we toured around them, admiring the flowers, and trying to ignore the weeds. While our plan had been to suspend harvest and activity during the tour, high summer demand meant that we couldn't, which actually turned out to be a great way to further the discussion about market channels and product specs.

The tour commenced with a short stroll through our landowner's filbert (hazelnut) orchard, giving everyone an opportunity to chat and visit. We discussed the challenges of transitioning conventional farmland into specialty crop land, the breakdown of our fields for harvest, and the growth that we've seen over the last 20 years of growing flowers.

At field one, I truly felt like Willy Wonka releasing a bunch of sugar-crazed kids into a field of dahlias. Luckily I did not attempt to somersault over the pile of gravel I was using as a step, not sure my insurance covers those kinds of acrobatics. But, really, it was a pleasure to watch my fellow flower farmers meander through the dahlias, talking varieties and colors. And while I really wish that I could have erased the weeds from view, seeing other farmers sigh in relief to know that we all deal with the same ones was good for me!

We spent time chatting about eucalyptus, roses, and woodies, and then headed to our newest annual field with a quick overview of pumpkins and squash. Stopping at our barn and processing area gave us a chance to poke heads into the cooler, talk about employees, markets, pricing, and a myriad of other topics that we could have spent all day on.

With a quick walk to the parking lot we raffled off some great swag that Judy and Linda sent us (thank you!), and sent everyone on their way. All in all a wonderful morning of talking about what we love to talk about, flowers!

It was a pleasure to watch my fellow flower farmers meander through the dahlias, talking varieties and colors. And while I really wish that I could have erased the weeds from view, seeing other farmers sigh in relief to know that we all deal with the same ones was good for me!

A big thanks to everyone in the West and Northwest Region (and Val!), for making it out to share the day with us, you made it so great! Thank you to our staff, and particularly our tour guides Aaron, Chelsey and Ashley for all their hard work to make this tour happen! And thank you to the staff at the ASCFG office and the Board for prioritizing these tours in the face of such uncertainty.

While I can't wait to get back to a more normal type of conference, I do hope that we can move forward with this kind of tour as a regular staple in the schedule. There is truly no replacement for being on a farm, seeing how farmers work, and talking directly to other farmers!

CANADA

Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan

Janis Harris
Harris Flower Farm
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Weather Extremes Seem to be the New Norm?

2021 has been full of extremes on our farm. The situation was similar for much of the world.

It's definitely concerning. The hottest, the coldest, the driest, the wettest. Even within small pockets there were micro weather extremes.

Our farm experienced extreme rainfall in July, upwards of 25". The longest no-rain stretch for us in July was 3.5 days. August was almost as wet. Our clay loam soil can't handle that kind of water. Our dahlia field suffered. It isn't producing blooms at all. At this point, I'm hoping to salvage the tubers. We have a one-acre field and by early September I had picked one stem. Luckily the zinnia have loved the weather conditions so we are able to use zinnia in place of dahlia.

The western part of Canada, the Pacific Northwest, and Midwest experienced extreme drought. I heard of farms that lost large percentage of their annual flowers because they burned up and literally baked in the field. Wildfires threatened farms and families—I wish I could have sent them some of our water.

Extreme heat waves landed on so many parts of the continent this summer, including record-breaking temperatures and number of days over a certain temp. I hope everyone took care while working in the heat. We really tried to work in the cooler parts of the day but there are times that we just had to work. Our coolers ran nonstop trying to keep the flowers cool. We had multiple successions of sunflowers bloom at the same time causing both an abundance and a scarcity of sunflower supply.

On a plus, we had an awesome crop of cool flowers this spring. Larkspur, bachelor buttons, and nigella overwintered in the field. This was a first for us here in southwest Ontario, zone 6a. Of course, at the moment we have not been able to plant cool flowers yet because the ground is still wet.

We also had eucalyptus overwinter for the first time. It has been amazing. I can't believe the vigor and growth on the eucalyptus TREES. This was a blessing because all of our eucalyptus plug orders were cancelled this spring.

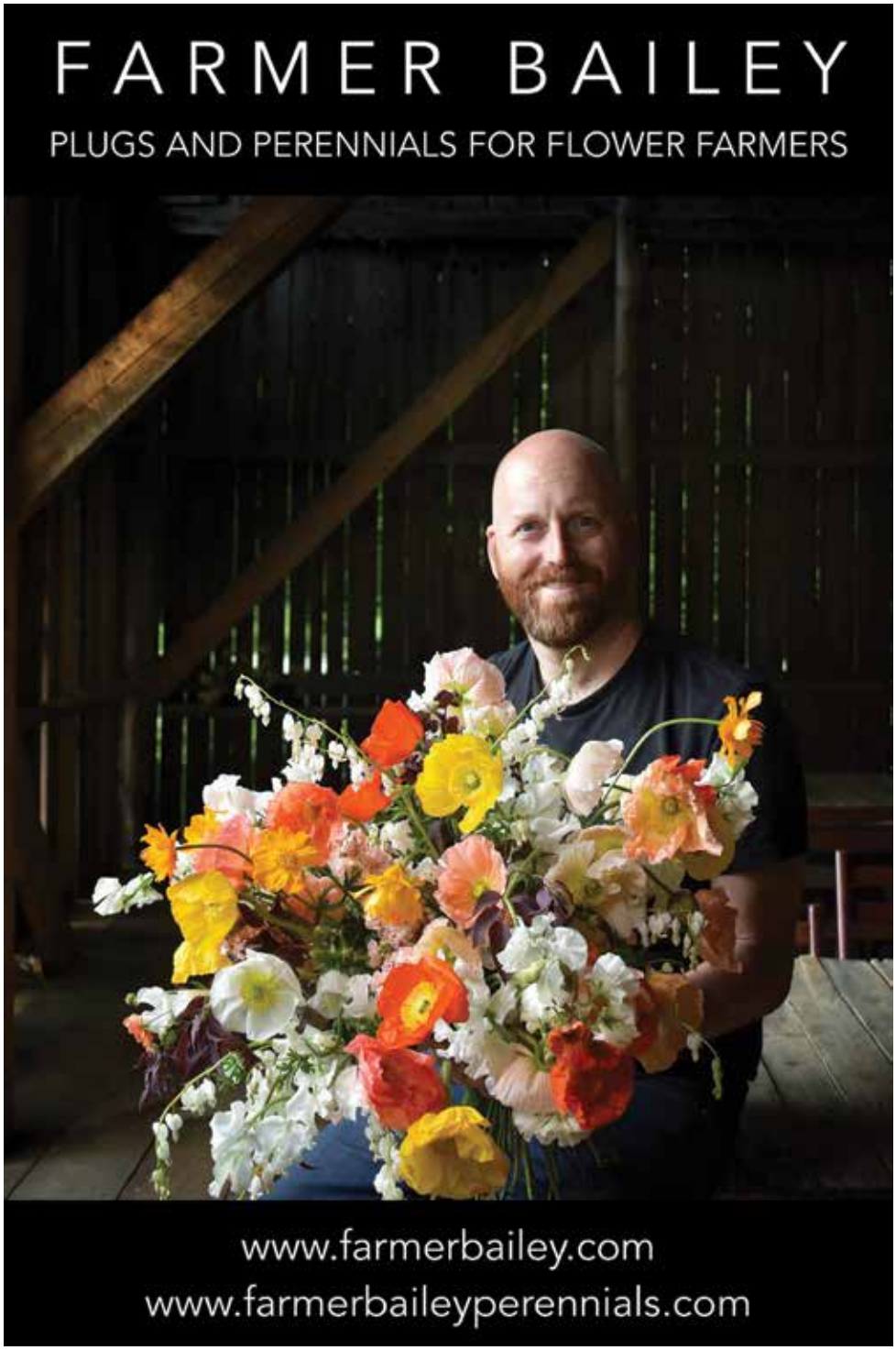
I'm not sure how to plan for the future other than to plan that there will be extreme weather. But the best trait a farmer can have is the "stick to it" trait. I'm still planning next year. Ready for a new year and a new growing season. The slate gets wiped clean each year and always thinking "Next year will be a great year."

Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

Sandra Allen, Pretty Petals, Orrtanna, PA
Holly Almond, Mocksville, NC
Diana Anderson, Bedrock Gardens, Northwood, NH
Erin Anderson, Temple Creek Flower Co., Girard, PA
Denise Arciszewski, Arci/Power Petals, Statesville, NC
Jennifer Arcuri, Sunrise Gardens, Wilmington, NC
Masako Armstrong, Belle Botany, Annapolis, MD
Chelsey Attebery, Corvallis, OR
Krista Baeza, Flowers from Judith, Coral Springs, FL
Nicki Bailey, Farm 21, Akron, AL
Kimberly Barnett, Scottown, OH
Kyle Barney, Hyrum, UT
Carrie Barnhardt, Barnhardt Farms of Rowan County, Mooresville, NC
Mary Barry-Magsamen, Barry's Blooms, Louisville, NE
Shirley Barth, Citrona Blooms, Winters, CA
Tami Bator, Petals & Greens, Lombard, IL
Megan Bayha, Baby T-Rex Farms, New Orleans, LA
Patricia Beane, Grounded Seed Flower Farm, Wiscasset, ME
Courtney Bearden, Bearden Blooms, Round Rock, TX
Nichole Becker, Dirt Monk, Williamstown, VT
Maria Beetison, Clear Creek Farmhouse & Co., Ashland, NE
Heather Behee, Wyld Heather Farm, Yakima, WA
Lacey Bell, Clear Sky Flowers, Leon, IA
Mary Berle, Lila's Mountain Farm, Glendale, MA
Reena Borwankar, Extraordinary Home & Garden Choices, Falls Church, VA
Melissa Bossler, Bossler Gardens, Highland, IL
Kim Bowling, Summer Thyme Blooms, Morrow, OH
Christa Brassington, Sundust Farm, El Cajon, CA
Nicol Brausewetter, Eagleview Farm, West Lorne, ON, Canada
Elizabeth Brown, Foxglove Farmhouse, York, ME
Stephany Bryant, Danville, VA
Amanda Buck-Ortega, Celia Belle Farms, Lorton, VA
Stacy Buckley, The Joyful Farm, Newberg, OR
Carrie Buppert Frasure, Buppert's Farm, Finksburg, MD
Peter Candy, Millstream Valley Gardens, Berwick, NB, Canada
Erin Champion, Posie Fields, Woodstock, GA
Oscar Chavez, Microledon Farm, Conway, SC
Carla Chevrient Kienzle, Whimsy Twins, Lancaster, PA
Reginna Chidester, Howell, MI
Lauren Child, Flower Child Heirlooms, Charlotte, NC
Heather Connell, Heatherly Floral and Design, Charlotte, NC
Mary Conner, Blossom Thyme Flowers, Winamac, IN
Linda Cook, Spring River Flowers, Kingston, MA
Morgan Cooper, Lore Farm, Reidsville, NC
Marti Cox, New Mercies Bloom, Sweet Home, OR
Laurie Craig, Seascape Flowers, Watsonville, CA
Lydia Cranston, Hope Meadows Farm, Belton, MO
Carla Crim, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Hamden, NY
Miranda Crimbring, Florence Flower Farm, Florence, TX
Maranda and Andrew Crump, Crumps Half Acre, Winthrop, NY
Stacy Cummings, Christa Farm, Alden, NY
Kaleigh Cunningham, Front Porch Farm, Cary, IL
Alexis Currie, Ball Seed, Kennard, TX
David Dahlson, Mayesh Wholesale Florist, Doral, FL
Madeline Davenport, Fireweed Flower Co., Northfield, MN
Tina Decker, Backyard Bouquets, Van Wert, OH
Jamie Delannoy, Colley Flower Farm, Colleyville, TX
Theresa Dessonville, Third Day Family Farms, Mandan, ND
David Devery, Mabuhay Gardens, Portland, OR
Holly Dickson, Friendship Flower Farm, Guttenberg, IA
Amy Diliberto, Flowers at Cider Hill, Kansas City, KS
Dieynaba Diop, Teranga Flower Farm, Stamford, NY
Stephen Dobek, Peach House Farm, Toccoa, GA
Cory Doyal, Urban Harvest Microfarm, Little Elm, TX
Sarah Drury, Drury Floral/ Drury Flower Farm, Lexington, KY
Ashley Dubiel, GG's Flower Farm, Howell, MI
Michelle Duffney, Michelle's Flower Farm, Montgomery, MN
Lorie Dunbar, Goldfinch Flower Co., Ottawa, ON, Canada
Kelli Dunlap, Farm of the Rising Sun, Clarkesville, GA
Debra Dwyer, North Scituate, RI
Audrey Epp Schmidt, Sweet Potomac Farm, Seneca Rocks, WV
Adelaide Every, Farm Hand Farm, Missoula, MT
Rachael Faber, Grace Farm, Glade Spring, VA
Jesse Feldmus, Petal Creek Farm, Red Hook, NY
Shannon Fisher, Spanish House Farm, Kansas City, KS
Emily Fitzpatrick, Mapleton Acres, Arthur, ON, Canada
Peggy Fleischauer, Elmwood, ON, Canada
Davida Flowers, Davida's Flowers, Oakland, KY
Kristina Franklin, Doddridge, AR
Jennifer Frisbie, Frisbie's Flowers, Edwardsville, IL
Chris Gang, Pistil and Stamen Flower Farm, New Orleans, LA
Julie Garity, Hello Daisy Flower Farm, Canton, GA
Tina Garner, Macon, GA
Betti Garren, Alpha-Bet Dogwash/Flower Farm, Pickens, SC
Natalie Geehr, January & June, Fresno, CA
Karen Genest, New Song Farm, West Enfield, ME
Kristi Gill, Gill Hill Flower Farm, West Friendship, MD
Beverly Glass, Frog Hollow Flower Farm, Placerville, CA
Liza Goetz, Wildly Native Flower Farm, Chestertown, MD
Chelsea Gore, Pasture Petals, Sapulpa, OK
Laura Graham, Soft Day Flower Farm, Jacksonville, FL
Maggie Gravedoni, Ruth and Piper, Marietta, GA
Sharla Green, Green's Garden, Patton, MO
Sophia Greenberg, Athens, GA
Barbara Greenwald-Mauldin, Noble, OK
Carla Gremillion, Gremillion Family Farms, Marksville, LA
Lisa L. Grim, The Silos on Table Rock, Biglerville, PA
Beth Grimes, Lula, GA
Regina Grubb, Pint Size Posies, Hoodsport, WA
Stephanie Harber, Life in Bloom Flower Farm, Gilmer, TX
Cynthia Hargrove, Holly Springs Farm, Lothian, MD
Denise Harless, Plain City, OH
Heidi Harwell, Blue Jar Farm, Felch, MI
Kristy Hawkins, Grace Filled Gardens, Halifax, VA

Jennifer Hayden, Fera Flowers, Islesboro, ME
Sharon Herbert, Blanco, TX
Ellen Hinckley, San Gabriel, CA
Savanna Hobbs, Rainbow Roots Floral Co., Maryville, TN
Heather Hoffman, Rock Hill Flower Farm, Pottersville, MO
Tarah Holman, Posy Cut Flowers, Cincinnati, OH
Connie Homerick, Ohio Cut Flower Collective, Lucas, OH
Caitlyn Horn, Rainier Homestead Farm, Enumclaw, WA
Sarah Howard, Eatonville Nursery, Eatonville, WA
Christy Howell, Plants Everywhere, Steeleville, IL
Jennifer Hubbard, Windswept Moonlight Farm, Woodlawn, ON, Canada
Seth Hubert, Hubert Farms, New Market, AL
Lindsay Huckabaa, Huck-a-Bee Flower Farm, Jenks, OK
Jennifer Husmann, Ladybug Lane Flower Farm, Guthrie, OK
Jennifer Ickes, New Freedom, PA
Leslie Irizarry, Tiny Bee Flower Farm, Norristown, PA
Kelli Janice, Willow Oak Flower Farm, Timberlake, NC
Becky Jarvis, Whimsical Flowers, Norfolk, VA
Whitney Jaye, Sunbird Flowers, Lithonia, GA
Lori John, Ash Canyon Flower Farm, Carson City, NV
BethAnn Johnson, Johnson Creek Flower Farm, Crystal Springs, MS
Sarah Johnson, Fire Lily Farm, Verbena, AL
Carla Jones, Flowerside Farms, Magnolia, TX
Stephanie Jones, Saltcatcher Farms, Bamberg, SC
Rufus Jupiter, Resilient Root Flowers, Viroqua, WI
Susan Karman, Karman Family Farm, Neenah, WI
Katie Keene Churchman, Laughing Earth Flowers, Louisville, KY
Kelly Kennoy, Urban Bliss Garden & Pre-Cuts, La Porte, IN
Carmen Ketron, Clemson Univ. Coop. Ext., Darlington, SC
Amy King-Crandall, Lulu's Blooms, North Stonington, CT
Lauren Kirchner, Flowerside Farms, Magnolia, TX
Amanda Kitaura, Bloom, Sacramento, CA
Diane Koss, Love 'n Fresh Flowers, Philadelphia, PA
Yael Krevsky, Brooklyn, NY
Hillane Lambert, Cherokee, NC
Mary Lang, Sweet Henry Flower Farm, Clear Lake, WI
Marchelle Ledfors, Beauty and the Bees, Bloomfield, NM
Kauna Lei, South San Francisco, CA
Marsha Lembitz, My Sweet Flower Patch, Berthoud, CO
Holly Lemieux, Buds-N-Berries, Bardstown, KY
Lisa Liermann, San Anselmo, CA
Liz Linnemeyer, Wozani Farm, Frederick, CO
Rolanda Lister, Lana's Flowers, Joelton, TN
Kate Luettel, Hen and the Hawk Floral, Omaha, NE
Melissa Lumley, Fairwind Farms, Sarnia, ON, Canada
Deborah Majerus, Iron Butterfly Inc., Rochester, MN
Crystal Malloy, Gateley Hill Gardens, Dardanelle, AR
Jessica Martin, Island Flower Farm, Bowser, BC, Canada
Emily Maschal-O'Donnell, Goode Farm, Ballston Spa, NY
Alexandra Mason, Ardesco Farms, Louisville, KY
Paul Matalucci, Apple Core Farm & Cut Flowers, Hood River, OR
Leslie McCardell, Hopewell Flower Farm, Elverson, PA
Sydney McIntosh, Callaway Floral, Ottawa, ON, CANADA
Elissa McKinley, Sweetpea Enterprise, Milwaukee, WI
Jennifer McMaster, Five Hearts Farm, East Olympia, WA
Renee McNerhany, Garden Creek Farm Flowers, Canton, NC
Elizabeth Menkveld, Menkveld Farm, Nolensville, TN
Kelly Meringolo, Express Seed Company, New Rochelle, NY

Truc Mertz, Permacreek Farm, Polk City, FL
Claudinne Miller, Susannah's Watch B&B, Mechanicsville, MD
Shelia and John Miller, Cottage Blooms, Palmyra, VA
Kristy Milliken, Morrisville, NC
Allison Moffett-Santos, Curry Creek Farm, Hector, NY
Heidi Mohagen, Black Dog Farms, Mound, MN
Nikki Molenbeek, The Purple Bee, Spokane Valley, WA
Catherine Mooneyham, Cat's Cut Flowers, Chesnee, SC
Sheena Morgan, Denver, CO
Virginia Morrall, Columbia Falls, MT
Monique Morris, Epiphany Eight Farms, Bryantown, MD
Kimberly Morrow, Howling at the Moon Blooms, Sherborn, MA
Matt Mossburg, Mossburg Farms, West Palm Beach, FL
Patty Mulligan, 5-Leaf Clover, Bellevue, WA
Cissy Murphy, Savannah, TN
Meghan Murphy, Hazel Nursery, Pownal, VT
Rose Murray, Blue Sky Farm, Monticello, FL
Denise Neumann, Santa Rita Hills Lavender Farm, Lompoc, CA
Alexandra Norton, Hummingbird's Blooms, Sarasota Springs, NY
Mike O'Grady, Baumhart Berry Farm, Vermilion, OH
Danielle Odhner, Glenhurst Ltd., Bryn Athyn, PA
Rachel Pace, Lemon Lane Farm, Raymore, MO
Nicole Pacheco, Open Air Farm, San Jose, CA
Michele Paciunas, Baxter, TN
Brooke Palmer, Jenny Creek Flowers, Trumansburg, NY
Chelsea Parkinson, Prescott, AZ
Jodi Passwaters, Gather Farm & Flowers, Amherst, WI
Jessica Patino, Flower Fairy Farms, Riverdale, CA
Yvonne Pegram, Dry Dock Flower Farm, Henderson, NC
Eric Pitzen, Ball Flora Plant, Elburn, IL
Denise Pizzini, Damsel Garden, Stuyvesant, NY
Afton Potter, Portland, OR
Gail Prevatte, Field and Flora, Robbins, NC
Jody Prosser, Barefoot Acres, Fountain Inn, SC



Lauren Prutow, McKenna Big Island Blooms, Kamuela, HI
Steve Rabel, Love 'n Fresh Flowers, Philadelphia, PA
Laurie Rakowski, Love 'n Fresh Flowers, Chalfont, PA
Jodie Rand, Thistle Dew Farm, Charlestown, NH
Sharene Rausch, Beautiful Blooms and Bounty, Lima, OH
Elizabeth Reames, Camden, SC
Lesia Reudelhuber, Lexington, NC
Mardi Rhoden, Quite Contrary Flower Farm, Labertouche, Vic, Australia
Patricia Ridgeway, Floral Ridge Farm, Union, WV
Angie Rittman, Blue Springs, MO
Criss Roberts, White Pines Flower Farm, Ainsworth, IA
Tamara Robertson, Wandering Acres, Forsyth, MT
Chantal Rollison, Fairy Creek Flowers, Hydes, MD

Ande Rosales-Becker, Monticello, FL
Sue Rosenfield, Rosenfield Farm, Bellevue, WA
Nancy Rossiter, Three Collie Farm, Yulee, FL
Barbara Rowlandson, Midland, ON, Canada
Tina Roy, Nash Creek Farm, Nashville, TN
Whitney Rudolph, Heritage Acres Farm, Yoakum, TX
Christopher Ruske, Cumberland Nurseries, Millville, NJ
Samantha Sanford, Young Family Flower Farm, Vinemont, AL
Amanda Sattler, Uproot Blooms, Crestwood, KY
Lydia Saylor, Saylor Family Farm, Louisville, KY
Kate Scanlon, Santa Cruz, CA
Misty Schaecher, Lily Rose Fresh Cut Flowers, Grand Island, NE
Stacy Schmidgall, Subtle Stems, Minier, IL
Melissa Schultz, Turtle Bay Gardens, Medford, WI
Joyce Schwartz, Benjamin Blooms, Benjamin, UT
Amy Schwarz, Scene Outside, Carlton, KS
Lisa Schwarz, Coast Blooms, Portsmouth, NH
Lyndsay Shafer, Rooted in Medina, Medina, OH
Bonnie Shepherd, Passing Wind Plantation, Stockbridge, GA
Sarah Shoffner, Sweet Thistle Farms, Selma, CA
Diane Shuck, Farmhaus Flowers, Baldwin City, KS
April Shuneson, Vind Kulle Farm, Red Wing, MN
Mark Smith, In Season Cut Flower Farm, Locust, NC
Cindy Smith-Putnam, Bleeding Heart Flower Farm, Stevensville, MT
Catherine Snow, Heirloom Dahlias of Maine, Kennebunk, ME
Katie Specht, Moonlight Blooms Farm, Santa Rosa, CA
Melanie Stallings, Moonlight Ridge Farms, Gretna, VA
Chris and Kelly Stanley, Gray Arbor Farm, Georgetown, KY
Shellie Stapleton, Sheridan, IN
Jenna Stoll, Slowroads Flower Farm, Milwaukee, WI
Sarah Strouse, Pikesville, MD
Cynthia Studdert, Studdert Family Farm, Sonoma, CA
Marly Surena-Llorens, Fenimore & Rutland, Allentown, PA
Carol Szugaj, Szugaj Farms, Inc., Bethany Beach, DE
Renee Tanabe, Magnolia Flower Farm, Gridley, CA
Jean Townley, Three Dog Farm, Saint Jo, TX
Dena Trego, Hoof 'N Garden Farm, Elyria, OH
Kelly Tripp, Inspiring Gardens Inc., Hammond, IN
Sandra Tritt, Tapestry Flower Farm, Oneida, TN
Josette Tyson, Bangor, MI
Carolyn Ucciferro, Joy in Hand Flower Farm, Forest Hill, MD
Alexandra Uhll, Greenacre Flowers, Lincolnville, ME
Madeline Wachtel, Bloomcourt, Chappaqua, NY
Brooke Waddell, Bellafield Flower Farm, Sabina, OH
Nicole Walker, Hollyhock Flower Farm, Boring, OR
Jen Watkins, Happy Hills Flower Farm, Cashton, WI
Summer Wilkinson, Sweetie Pie Farms, Minor Hill, TN
Sarah Willey, Herring Run, Galena, MD
Mary Wilson, M2G2 Farm, Skiatook, OK
Robyn Winwood, Mosier, OR
Christina Wrenn, Wrenn's Farm, Zebulon, NC
Natasha Wyss Brahmst, Good Hope Farm, South Salem, NY
Danielle Zaveta, Middletown, MD
Magdalen Zinky, The Flower Girl, Greeneville, TN

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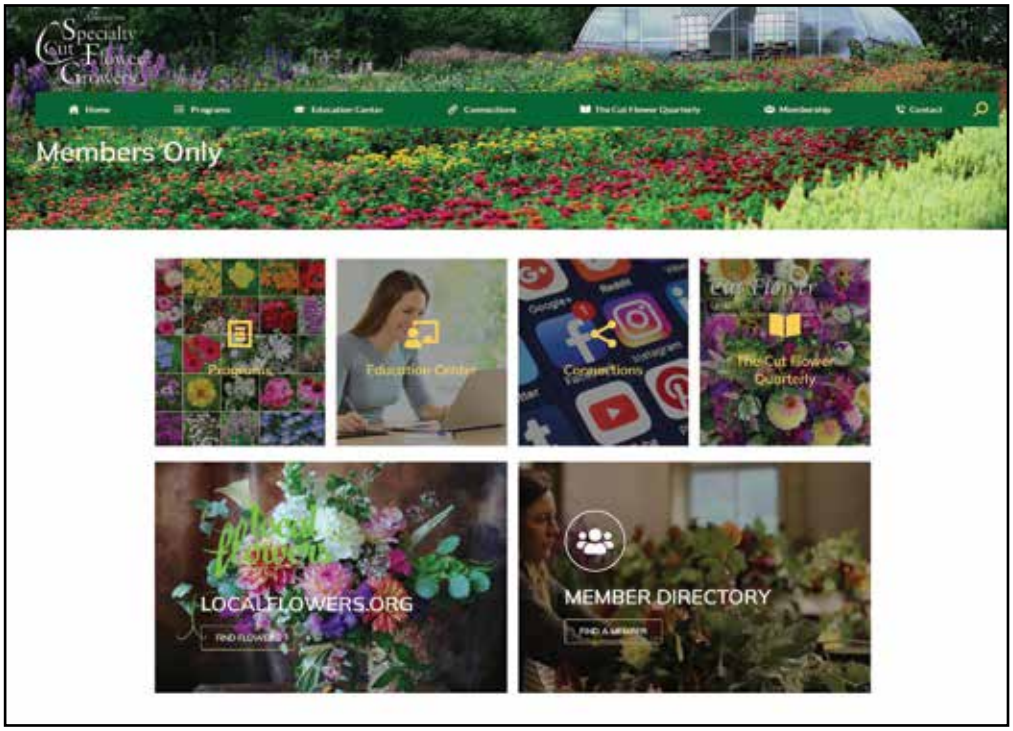

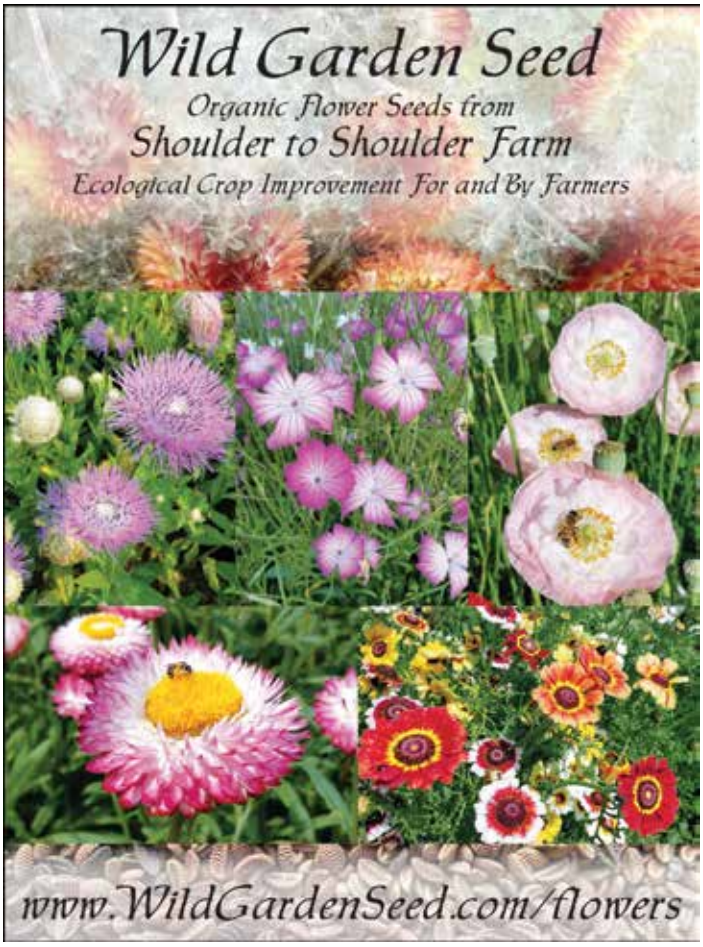
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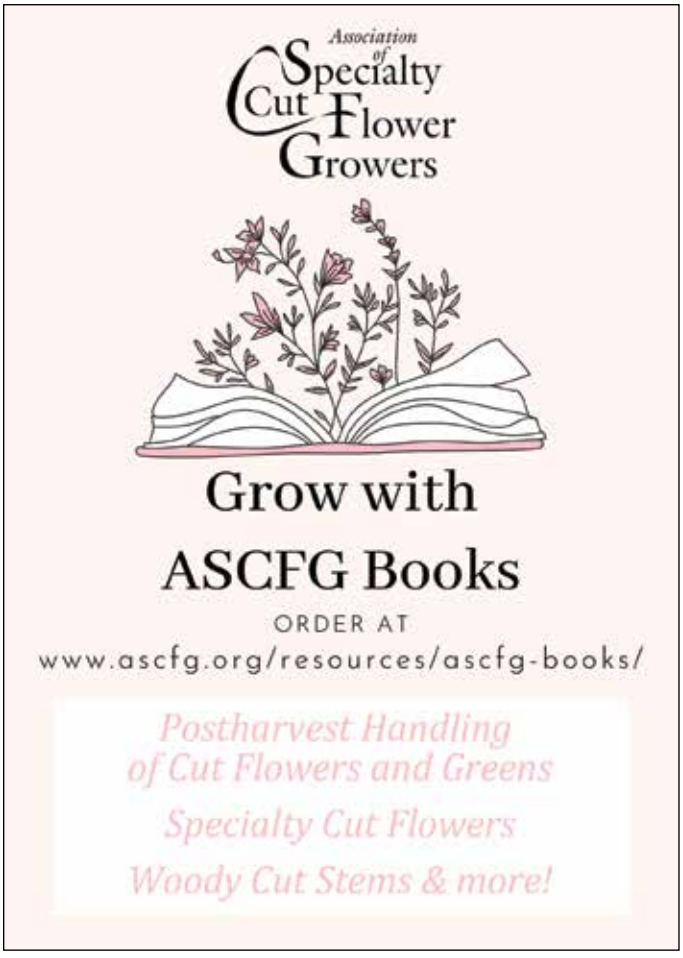
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From the Supply Side

Judy M. Laushman

ASCFG members and other readers of *The Cut Flower Quarterly* tell us that they look forward every year to the New Varieties section. If you're new to us, you may not realize that this feature used to be presented in the Winter issue; the heavy demand for cut flower seeds, plants, bulbs, and plugs necessitated its scheduling to be move to Fall.

On the editorial side, it's fun for us to receive these beautiful photos and sometimes lyrical description; as growers and sellers of this plant material, it's essential that you know which breeders and suppliers are offering the varieties you're looking for. Even better, some that you weren't looking for, but now may find intriguing.

We wondered, though, about the process of introducing these cultivars to the industry, so we asked a few of our partners to share their insights. We were happy to hear from Stacey Hirvela, Spring Meadow Nursery; Mary Vaananen, Jelitto Perennial Seeds; Ko Klaver, Zabo Bulb and Botanical Trading Company; Dave Dowling, Ball Colorlink; Marilyn Barlow, Select Seeds; and Bailey Hale, Farmer Bailey. Here's what they told us.

How do breeders decide when it's necessary to provide a new cultivar of a popular cut flower?

Stacey: While there is definitely a lot of breeding that takes place especially for the cut flower market among some of the most popular genera—roses, lisianthus, dianthus, etc.—our primary breeding goal is landscape performance. Many of our varieties also happen to be suitable for cuts, either because they are a new version of an established genus or they bring some sort of novel use/color/form to the market. We love plants that have multiple uses, and the great thing about being suitable for cutting is that appeals to a huge swath of homeowners as well as to professional cut flower growers. At the end of the day, the primary goal of landscape performance is beneficial to all segments of the market, though.

Mary: Sometimes new forms of a variety appear like magic in our seed production fields. If it piques the interest enough it will be channelled into the breeding process. Traits like compact form, foliage color, vigor, rebloom, etc. are all desirable.

Ko: Breeders decide when a new variety is to be added to the cut flower market for several reasons: 1. The selection is a game-changer compared to current product in the market (e.g. Roselily) or provides significant yield count or disease resistance. 2. The selection is an improvement over what currently is in the market with more, or larger flowers, longer stems, etc. 3. Sometime breeders want to improve and gain market share of a successful group, such as hydrangea; this is how markets are flooded. 4. Limited commercial trialing will provide much insight if we want to continue with a specific genetic. Trials in all different locations.

Bailey: Cut flower breeders tend to be experts of their crop, not necessarily experts on floral trends and needs. They understand the capability of their crop of choice and try to maximize its usefulness and visual appeal by combining the best traits of two or more related plants. In Holland, and presumably other countries, breeders work closely with growers and designers to trial new varieties and receive feedback. I don't think they identify a hole in the market before starting a breeding project, they try to find a market for the crop they are working with.

How long (on average) does it take from that to the decision to seed, plants, or bulbs being available to growers?

Stacey: I can speak only to woodies, but for us, it's an 8-12 year process. Herbaceous plants would generally be shorter.

Mary: It could be a few years or 20. For instance, our breeding of consistent strains of separate colors of single-flowering *Alcea rosea* (like the Chater's Double series) took 20 years. The impetus was a good customer wistfully wishing for the very same. (Maybe answering your first question, too.)

Dave: Three to five years.

Marilyn: We select out of a population of a species, and it takes about 3 years to build up enough supply of a new variety while removing off-types during this time. No hybrid seed is produced by us, and often our selections are composed

of a slightly variable mix of hues of pink, for example, rather than one shade of pink, which would involve more time to refine, and which, frankly, are less interesting in the garden.

Ko: A minimum 3-5 years to get annuals and perennials into the market. We need to build nucleus stock, or F1 seeds, or get vegetative tissue culture production going in a lab. Then we need to build numbers. Lilies and tulips can go as long as 6-10 years before significant stock is built up to a proper level of bulbs in the marketplace.

Bailey: This depends entirely on the crop and if it is seed grown or vegetatively produced.

Annuals complete their life cycle in one year, so seed breeders can move quite quickly. It may take 5 or 10 generations to meet a certain goal and then another year or two to produce enough seed to meet demand. Initial work is usually done in highly-controlled greenhouses, while field seed scale production often happens outside in isolated fields. Working in both hemispheres can help, so a harvest can occur every 6 months or so.

Vegetatively-produced plants can move quickly as well. Once the breeder identifies one exceptional plant, propagation can start almost immediately. This can be accomplished by cuttings, through tissue culture, or in some cases division. It can take another year or two to bring these products to market, but they tend to be faster to produce than seed strains as the breeder must produce only one amazing plant, and then increase its numbers, compared to seed breeders who must to create a strain that will produce a uniform crop time and time again.

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Some plants are just plain slow. It takes 5 to 7 years to flower a peony seedling, and then it can take many decades to produce enough divisions to meet commercial demand. This explains the high cost of newer peony varieties. Many of the standards we grow today are more than 100 years old.

About how many new introductions of a given year go on to be successes, compared to the total number released that year?

Stacey: A great question! It really depends; sometimes an introduction will be made and its prevalence in the market will coincide with some new trend/zeitgeist and it will take off. I'd say our success rate is probably around 75%, though it's difficult to measure because of the much longer market life cycle of woodies; they take longer to grow, hence longer to get on the market.

Mary: There are usually one or two that catch the right eyes and go on to be hits.

Dave: Only a handful of all the potential new plants produced each year. I've heard for every plant introduced to the market, there can be 1,000 that didn't make the cut.

Marilyn: We offer no more than two new selections by us in a year, all are prefaced by "Select" such as our cornflower 'Select Ultra Violet' and our new tobaccos 'Select Night Flight' and 'Select Misty Dawn'.

Ko: The average selection seedling and then going to commercial production succese is either 1% or 2% of the overall seedling selections, hence the breeder royalty process for NEW genetics. This is done to provide independent breeders with a percentage of income guaranteed of the plants produced and sold. Some breeders want a royalty of every stem being sold, but that is a tedious piece of administration.

Bailey: Tough to say. Maybe only 10-20% of new introductions gain real traction in the American market. Much of what I have introduced has gained traction, as I am in the business of finding new and interesting material. I pass over thousands of varieties that I don't feel are a good fit for small- to medium-scale American growers in favor of the handful that look promising. Of course, we are a fraction of the global market. Globally, most of the greatest hits (by volume) are things like roses, mums, alstroemeria, and gypsophila. These may not find a home in American flower fields but internationally are very important.

What is your favorite part of this process?

Stacey: I love the story-telling aspect of it. Each of our plants has a unique back story about how and why it was developed, what it does, what it offers. I love using photos, video, and writing to tell that story to prospective buyers and get them as excited for our plants as I am.

Mary: As I am not a breeder I can only guess. For me the imagining of something new—never before growing in a garden on earth—would be the favorite part. The dreaming stage.

Dave: As a sales rep, seeing new varieties become a success.

Ko: The selection process: seeing that specific, chosen young plant or series making it all the way to the TOP, and knowing that I had a little piece in bringing that to fruition, like for the Roselily.

Bailey: As a hunter of new varieties I love travelling to see new varieties in Europe and Japan. When I was in Japan in 2019 I found a few varieties that were not targeted for the American market, but were meant to be for Japan only. In fact, these were the varieties I found to have the most potential with ASCFG members. The seed suppliers listened and have started to offer a number of these varieties to the U.S. market. I also love trials. Of course, being the first in the country to grow a certain crop is exciting, but more often than not they don't work out as planned. But when they do and I know they'll be popular, I do get pretty excited.

How important is input from the cut flower growers who are buying this material from you, and what's the best way for growers to share their experiences with you?

Stacey: It is very important to us, and we would welcome any feedback, any time. Overall, the nursery industry makes a lot of assumptions about what others—from retailers, to consumers, to cut flower growers—want, so it's helpful to have those assumptions questioned. For us here at Spring Meadow, they would be welcome to contact me (Stacey@springmeadownursery.com) or if they are a customer, their account manager works as well.

Ko: Commercial trials feedback, meaning that when I set up trials with ASCFG growers, I want detailed performance reports. This will tell me whether I should ramp it up in full production, or be cautious, or if I should drop the selection completely. I do track social media pages a lot; I don't comment often, but do scan most all the posts in ASCFG private group.

Marilyn: It is interesting to hear which flower varieties do well in the garden from the cut flower grower's perspective.

Bailey: Numbers talk. We can look at sales histories to see what is increasing or decreasing in popularity. When we introduce brand new varieties, I always ask for direct feedback.

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